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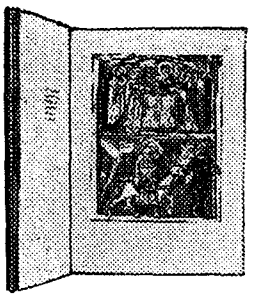

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

To Talk or Not To Talk

ONE OF THE most painful facts of the modern world is the seeming irrelevance of a rational approach to international affairs. This is particularly true in our relationship with the Soviet Union. Reason, one may assume, would dictate that the sane way for human beings to settle their disputes is for them to sit down together and thrash out their differences. Yet when the United States has chosen to sit down with the Russians, the results have often been to make us appear the fools.

Many people, of course, have a ready explanation for these results. The Communists, they fervently cry, are unscrupulous, cynical people dedicated to conquer us by fair means or foul. From a Communist perspective, negotiation is nothing more than another way to the same old end. Thus, we are told, to negotiate with Communists is naively and stupidly to play into their hands.

Few men, surely, are likely to deny the apparent logic of this position. It is a logic which seems complete, a logic supported by many facts and borne out by much of modern history. Munich taught the world many lessons, not the least of which is that single-minded dictators are not reasonable men. And, in the instance of the Soviet Union, it has often turned out that when we ceased talking and took a firm stand the Soviets backed down. Thus put, the arguments against talk, against negotiation, might seem to be conclusive.

There are, nonetheless, many crucial points missing in this argument. Besides misunderstanding the very purpose of negotiation, it does not take account of the danger of a nuclear war. If such a logic would be risky even in a pre-nuclear era, it is even more irrational for our time. The irrationality lies in the fact that it could bring about, by dint of miscalculation, a war which could destroy our own civilization quite as totally as that of the Soviet Union. One prime reason for negotiation is that, if it fails, there is some opportunity to start afresh, to devise a new policy. There is, in our time, little possibility of starting over if the big stick strategy fails.

FOR THIS REASON we welcome the resumption of the Geneva talks, even if their chances might seem doubtful. Where these talks will lead we cannot guess. One doesn't have to be very astute to know that the Soviets will use the talks to their own advantage; that they will try to deceive us, to make us relax our guard, to mislead and trick us. One can hardly forget that the last talks went for 340 sessions only to be smashed by the Soviet resumption of nuclear tests. Nor should we forget that the Soviet agreement to resume the talks comes at the supposed completion of their own test series and with an eye on the negative world opinion those tests generated. The resumption of the talks plainly appears to offer many more advantages for them than for us.

Here again, however, appearances can be very deceptive. This time around we hold some trump cards which we did not hold before. The most obvious one is experience. We are not likely to be again deceived into weakening our own position while the talks are in progress. The decision of the Administration to refuse to accept a moratorium apart from a complete test ban treaty is the clearest sign of our new stance. While we do not favor the resumption of atmospheric tests at this time it seems to us altogether wise for this country not to promise not to conduct such tests. In this sense, Mr. Arthur Dean's statement that American policy will be to "test and talk" has much to commend it.

Another advantage which the present talks offer to us is the possibility of some propaganda victories of our own. We go into the talks, at least, with the advantage that we have not tried to match the Soviet test series with a comparable one. As long as President Kennedy perseveres in this course, we will have an edge in world opinion. For our part we

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still believe that world opinion ought to play a role in the formation of American policy. There is no reason why the Geneva talks cannot offer us some good opportunities to reiterate once again our own desire for peace. For all the pitfalls and frustrations, there is no better way to make clear our honorable aims—justice and peace for all men—than to sit down and negotiate.

Those who would have us refuse to enter into any kind of negotiations with the Russians, and would have us ignore world opinion, make the mistake of conceiving the cold war solely in military terms. Yet surely we ought to know by now that much more is at stake than the eventual outcome of a Soviet-American power struggle. The struggle against Communist encroachment is still a struggle for the minds of men. Even if we succeeded in making the Communists abandon forever war as a viable policy, we could still lose the ideological struggle.

The surest way to lose the ideological test would be for us to adopt a position which relied solely on nuclear might. We might well succeed in forestalling a nuclear war by simply frightening the Soviets away from it. This might temporarily save our own skins. In the long run, however, the rest of the world could easily go to Communism by default. The decisive advantage which negotiation offers is that it enables us to remain flexible in our policy; to adapt ourselves to changing situations. A rigid stand against negotiations, besides intensifying the arms race, could put us into a strait jacket from which there would be no escape.

General Eisenhower on TV

FORMER President Eisenhower, we have decided, is the kind of man who should never have a ghost writer. With a ghost writer, Mr. Eisenhower tends to deliver Republican banalities as if he had just invented them. Left on his own, he gets his syntax tangled and his sentences tend to trail off into nowhere. Nonetheless, through it all you often manage to see the spirit which led millions of Americans to decide that they liked Ike.

The reason for these musings on Mr. Eisenhower's personal style is his recent, hour-long appearance on a C.B.S.-TV interview program. With obvious reference to the case of General Edwin A. Walker, Mr. Eisenhower strongly urged officers of the armed forces to shun partisan politics.

"I believe the Army officer, Navy officer, Air officer, should not be talking about political matters," he said, "particularly domestically, and never in the international field, unless he is asked to do so because of some particular position he might hold. I

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JAMES O'GARA, *Managing Editor*
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do believe that our officers, when they receive recruits, have the need for making certain that these men are loyal people, understanding that they are defending the United States and the things for which she stands—her ideals, her aspirations, her principles, her rights. I do not believe they should try to do this in terms of partisan politics whatsoever."

Speaking as a General of the Army, Mr. Eisenhower said that for an officer to express opinions "on political matters or economic matters that are contrary to the President's" is "bad practice—very bad." As for the extremists so recently rebuked by President Kennedy, General Eisenhower had this to say: "I don't think the United States needs superpatriots. We need patriotism, honestly practiced by all of us, and we don't need these people that are more patriotic than you or anybody else." And who are extremists? General Eisenhower's description was explicit, including those who would "go back to eliminating the income tax from our laws and the rights of people to unionize" and those who "make radical statements . . . (and) . . . attack people of good repute who are proved patriots."

With all of this we agree, heartily, and we hope General Eisenhower's speech writers never find their way home again.

Job Prospects

UNEMPLOYMENT continues, in spite of expansion of the nation's defense industries and generally more profitable business operations. It embraces six and one-half per cent of the American labor force, and the experts promise little in the way of over-all improvement. The welcome news of rising factory payrolls, this fall, appears to reflect more the return to a full work-week in many industries than any marked increase in the number of jobs. Additional localities continue to report to Washington as new distress areas suffering from high incidences of unemployment. Our vaunted prosperity is spotty.

Besides such local depressed areas there are various groups of workers that are particularly hard hit. The unskilled and semi-skilled comprise the bulk of the wage-earners displaced by automation. Older workers who lose their jobs have increasing difficulty in finding new ones. For the most part, Negroes continue to be "the last hired and the first fired." Then, about one-fifth of the jobless total is made up of young people who have finished school and are unable to find work.

This latter group, with its great potentialities for achievement or frustration, is of special national concern. President Kennedy has called for a serious study of their problem. Secretary Goldberg in a five-point program for meeting nationwide unemployment stresses manpower development and job-training for young workers. The latest edition of the Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* predicts certain developments in the next decade that will affect young people. It is expected that there will be a one-third increase in the number of teaching positions; a continuing demand for engineers; many opportunities in the undermanned medical and dental professions. The number of white-collar positions is expected to increase twice as rapidly as the average for all new jobs. And even in such shrinking sources of employment as farming, railroads and mining, replacements will obviously be needed.

If, added to all this, more realistic unemployment insurance provides a deeper cushion for those laid off, the opportunities for gainful work will hardly supply the jobs now needed and meet the annual increase in the nation's labor force. Steady economic growth offers the only assured prescription for our chronic unemployment problem. Many factors could contribute to bring it about. One, advanced by the President and Mr. Goldberg, is freer and therefore more extensive international trade. Another is more rapid modernization and expansion of private enterprise, perhaps spurred on by special government tax credits. But in any case, substantially greater national production has to be based on confidence that there will be an ever-widening market for the larger flow of American goods and services.

It bears repeating that the greatest single opportunity for potential consumer demand in this country today derives from the lamentable inadequacy of certain essential public services. There is in many states a genuine, extensive need of more low-cost housing, more school and hospital facilities. Until such needs of our American society are squarely faced and met, unemployment on a major scale can hardly fail to continue as a formidable national problem.

Closing the Gap

THE "MISSILE GAP" we have all been worrying about, we are now given to understand, was only a mirage. Latest intelligence reports from all the services agree that the United States and the U.S.S.R. now have about the same number of intercontinental ballistic missiles ready for operation. These new intelligence estimates also indicate that if any slight missile superiority exists, it is the U.S. which has the advantage, or will soon have it, and not the

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Soviet Union, as we feared was the case only a few months back.

Some commentators—those who have been members of the "all is well" school—are now adopting a tone of vindication. The furor which arose from the now discredited intelligence reports of superior Soviet missile strength and capability was absurd, they say. It was a "synthetic" issue, manufactured and exploited for purposes of particular service advantage or for political reasons. But now the balloon has been punctured; as it turns out, they note, all *was* well and still is.

We are not so sure. If the missile strength of the U.S. is really equal or superior to that of the U.S.S.R., certainly we must all feel relief; but the current repudiation of the much-publicized "missile gap" raises a number of questions which are anything but reassuring.

It is not reassuring to be told that our intelligence systems can, at different times or at the same time, offer such wildly different or contradictory data. It is not reassuring to have it suggested, even stated openly, that the different military services consistently make intelligence reports which support their own branch in the unrelenting inter-service rivalry. It is not reassuring to have past intelligence conclusions now contemptuously dismissed. If our intelligence systems have been so unreliable in the past, how can we be confident that they are not wrong again?

Finally, the new missile reassurances themselves are not without a disturbing ambiguity. The reports we read all use the term "deterrent strength," and some of the experts have been telling us that "deterrent strength," whatever it means, is certainly not the same thing as "retaliatory strength." A recent National Planning Association study, for instance, concluded that total numbers of missiles, bombers, etc., are not the significant factor in the "balance of terror."

Because our missile sites are so few and so vulnerable, because our Strategic Air Command bombers are based also on a few known and vulnerable fields, because our mobile-missile programs are only getting underway, according to the N.P.A. report, our capacity to retaliate after a surprise nuclear attack has been dwindling even as our "strike first" power has been climbing. This loss in "retaliatory power" holds true, presumably, for the Soviet Union as well, which only adds to the danger of the present situation. The temptation to strike first obviously increases as conviction grows that effective retaliation, by either side, becomes impossible.

The point here is not that this analysis is correct, although we have not seen it refuted. The point is that these conclusions were reached on the basis of official data, intelligence reports and testimony by high-ranking military officers. And yet only the other day we read of another general, very highly placed, who declared that the U.S. could withstand a surprise nuclear attack and still "win," whatever he might have meant by that.

What are we to believe, on these absolutely crucial questions? Does anybody really know? And if the generals and the intelligence experts do know, which of them can we trust to tell the truth? The contradictory reports the American people have been getting make it increasingly clear that many of the "experts" have been and must now be wrong, that they have been at best incompetent and at worst insincere.

It is nothing less than our national survival which is at stake in the debates on our military policies, and yet these literally life-and-death questions have become hopelessly befogged in what seems to be a shocking conjunction of governmental incompetence, military partisanship and political irresponsibility. As we said, we are glad if the "missile gap" really does not exist, but the whole situation offers no grounds for rejoicing. What it rouses in our minds is dismay—and a deep anxiety about a national weakness we might well call the "intelligence gap."

A Revolutionary Council?

WHILE THERE is no solid information yet, it now appears very likely that the Protestant and Orthodox churches will be invited to send observers to the coming Second Vatican Council. Precisely how this would be arranged is, naturally, only a matter of speculation. No doubt such invitations will involve considerable difficulties, both on the Catholic and non-Catholic side. Regardless of the arrangement which is worked out, the important thing is that such an overture from the Church would be a radical and revolutionary development.

The most revolutionary aspect would not, however, be the new attitude toward Protestants and Orthodox which such an invitation would emphasize. Instead, it would indicate to the world—and to Catholics themselves—that the Church has the capacity to respond to new demands and new challenges. It would also indicate in an indirect way that the Church is now willing to accept the disunity of Christendom as, in part, its own responsibility. Significantly, Pope John XXIII has, in other contexts, already said just that. If the invitations are in fact issued we will surely be on the brink of a momentous change. What were once taken to be merely vain and romantic hopes may well become solid and real ones.

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Even the Optimistic Have Reservations about Our Culture

The Writer in America

JOHN P. SISK

"THIS IS SO large and complicated a country," Robert Graves once said about America, "that almost everything one says about it will seem to be true, if one speaks with sufficient assurance—even the most extraordinary things." Something very like this might be said of mass culture in America, about which it is possible to marshal facts and figures to substantiate a variety of attitudes, depending on one's point of view and the standards he measures with.

Certainly it is not hard for even the casual reader of the newspapers and mass circulation magazines to get the impression that the cultural picture in America has brightened: a highly regarded poet performs at the presidential inauguration; a big-league pitcher reviews books for the New York *Times Book Review;* ten million Americans are painting pictures; fifty non-commercial television stations are devoted to educational programs in large population areas; in Kentucky, long a popular symbol for the mudflats of culture, an arts and crafts train is leaving for a year-long tour of remote areas; the renovated *Saturday Evening Post* announces that its "Adventures of the Mind" will go into a second series; classical music longplays on an ever increasing number of the nation's forty some million record players.

If such snippets of information are not sufficient to fortify the American's congenital (but always precarious) optimism about the state of his country, cold figures are easily obtained. Indeed, the statistics on the number of museums, art galleries, symphony orchestras, civic theatre groups, book clubs, libraries and volumes published are so impressive that the mere recitation of them can induce a sense of cultural uplift. As Russel Lynes has said, more Americans seem to be involved in cultural activities than there are Americans.

Mr. Lynes has also reminded us that the statistics have to do with the cultural effort rather than with culture itself. But they do suggest that the condition upon which the prose of H. L. Mencken once grew fat have been somewhat ameliorated, especially since World War II. By 1952, the editor of *Partisan Review's* well-known symposium on "Our Country and its Culture" could observe that "until little more than a decade ago, America was thought to be hostile to art and culture. Since then the tide has begun to turn . . ."; Philip Rahv could call attention to a "reconciliation" of the intellectual and of the "*embourgeoisement* of the American intelligentsia"; and Edmund Wilson was able to speak of a revival of the "democratic creativeness which presided at the birth of the republic . . . accompanied by a remarkable renascence of American arts and letters."

RELATED TO this turning of the tide is the continuing post-war assessment, by intellectuals themselves, of the clichés, anachronistic thinking and self-deceptions their confreres are guilty of as they try to define themselves against the mass. The symposium on mass culture in the Spring 1960 issue of *Daedalus* would have been unthinkable fifteen years earlier. Morris Freedman's *Confessions of a Conformist* is symptomatic of the intellectual's growing awareness of how ritual, automatic and puritan the rejection of mass culture can be. Edward Shils, writing in the Autumn 1957 *Sewanee Review,* exposed the extent to which "the new critique of mass culture takes over many of the aristocratic and esthetic arguments and the anti-bourgeois attitudes of 19th century Europe." More recently, Joseph T. Klapper's *The Effects of Mass Communication,* especially if it is read in connection with Shil's essay, makes it clear that many of the attacks on mass culture are symptomatic of the attacker rather than critical of the culture.

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the writer-intellectuals as a whole have relaxed their critical vigilance over mass culture or have been willing to settle for the pent up animosities of a cold war. This was clear in the *Partisan* symposium. Even the optimistic contributors spoke with reservations and the pessimistic spoke as if the irrefutable dogma was that "the mass crushes beneath it everything that is different . . . excellent . . . individual . . . select" (Ortega y Gasset) and that "we remain a 'semi-barbarian superstate of the periphery'" (James Burnham).

A great number of poets, critics and novelists share

JOHN P. SISK, a frequent contributor to these pages, is a member of the faculty of Gonzaga University, Spokane.

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Mr. Burnham's jaundiced view, if not his politics. In recent years there have been few better opportunities to hear witnesses against the semi-barbarian superstate than at the three symposiums on American writing sponsored by *Esquire* magazine. The featured writers have been Saul Bellow, Leslie Fiedler, Wright Morris, Dorothy Parker, Ralph Ellison, Mark Harris, Dwight MacDonald, Norman Mailer, John Cheever, Philip Roth and James Baldwin. In the symposiums they disagreed on many things, but most of them appeared to accept an Ortega-like image of America in which the different, the excellent, the individual and the select are crushed.

A great number of the most highly regarded younger writers would also accept that image. They would agree, I believe, that Philip Roth's remarks in the March, 1961 *Commentary* that it is hard for the modern American writer "to make credible much of American reality" since "it stupifies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination." They dig Fiedler when he warns them that "when the writer first says 'Yes' he is already beginning to lie a little"; Mailer when he complains of the totalitarianism in everything; Cheever when he says that "having determined the nightmare symbols of our existence, the characters have become debased and life in the United States in 1961 is hell"; or Baldwin when he says that "there is no structure in American life today and there are no human beings."

NO DOUBT some allowance must be made in the above statements for dialectic exaggeration: the writers were after all on display and, like old-fashioned hell-fire preachers, were dramatically engaged with audiences they suspected of having secret affiliations with the enemy. They nevertheless gave a good representation of a prevailing attitude toward mass culture in America, not only as one finds it among serious writers now but, I am convinced, as one will continue to find it. To understand this paradox in which the writer reviles a culture in which members of his own class see some signs of improvement, and in which he never had it so good, it is necessary to understand what is perhaps his cardinal virtue.

Reporting on one symposium, Robert Gutwillig observed that confused and strong-headed as Norman Mailer is he might still be "the most honest man in America today." The honesty is the thing—honesty, the characteristic and inevitable virtue of a people compelled (if also bedeviled) by a pastoral vision of simplicity and innocence. And one traditional sign of the writer's honesty is the dim view he takes of popular opinion, popular optimism, popular culture. This is especially true in the twentieth century when, because of the elevation of the masses to a position of material well-being, it is impossible to ignore them. The writer attacks the vulgarity, the sentimentality, the materialism, the crippling fantasy, the hypocrisy of mass culture with a shocking and, at best, a therapeutic frankness.

Another traditional sign of the writer's honesty is his outspoken contempt for a way of life that is subordinated to the profit motive. The American writer is in full agreement with the medieval and Elizabethan writers about the corruption of money. Money has pulled down into a common hell Chaucer's Pardoner, Shakespeare's Shylock and Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan. This is also why the virtuous characters in American literature tend to be markedly careless about money: Ishmael, Huck Finn, Nick Adams, Eugene Gant, Dean Moriarity, Holden Caulfield, Steinbeck's Cannery Row outcasts. Even popular fiction must make its concessions (generally sentimental if not hypocritical as well) to the anti-money theme, as can be seen in novels like *The Hucksters, I Can Get It For You Wholesale* and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.*

This means, of course, that for the writer the business world is the natural habitat of the enemy. It means also that the writer's honesty is dialectically qualified by the dishonesty he tends to see as the inherent vice of a business civilization, in which the characteristic "virtues" are guile and greed. And for the writer it is hard to distinguish this world of dollar worship and pretense from the mass culture it exerts such control over and profits so much from. As the writer tends to see it, the myths of mass culture not only have their roots in money but are manipulated selfishly and cynically for money. This may be an extreme view, but in the cultural dialectic I am talking about to be against money is to be honest and virtuous—especially since to be for money, in a society whose official rhetoric still puts the emphasis on service, necessarily involves pretense.

But the writer whose natural tendency is to see mass culture as business—and money—corrupted is not just a writer. He is also a man in a certain time and place, and he can only exist as a writer by risking corruption: he may at any moment catch on, make money and become corrupted, The object lessons are always in front of him. Twain, Hemingway, Stephen Crane, Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Heggen, William Saroyan—the Bitch Goddess got her claws more or less damagingly into all of them. The enemy maneuvers cunningly in many disguises: the book clubs, the slick magazines, the universities, the Luce industry, television, Hollywood,

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foundation grants, lecture tours, advertising. It will even help him exploit his honesty: pay him well, for instance, for being his characteristically frank self about sex.

To be a writer in America is to be a figure in a morality play in which hell in the form of mass culture flames around one on every side. Only a heroic alertness to temptation will save him. And some of his worst temptations come from within, for mass culture is what he grows up in and never completely away from. Where is the American who is completely above the paradisiacal promise of popular myth? Mass culture is the Emma Bovary he must continually exorcize from his imagination. He may yearn for the sensuous abundance as much as the next man, but he has an instinctive fear that it means artistic emasculation.

This fear is an important factor in the perfectionism of his evaluation of mass culture—a condemnation that in its intransigency is in the best tradition of the American reforming spirit. He judges mass culture as if it had no alternative between lifting itself up to his level and wallowing in damnation; as if the average American, happy to sing along with Mitch and relax with *The Readers Digest* had once been presented with the choice between quality and vulgarity and had freely and perversely chosen the latter. For the writer it is an extreme situation where too much is at hazard; to ask too little of mass culture is really to ask too little of himself.

But if the writer fears popular culture because of its threat to his honesty he also fears it because he sees in it the confusion and disorientation, the chaotic wealth of unrealized potential, the unmanageable flood of messages, the undisciplined groping for value and pattern, that is so often simply the magnification of his own condition. It is the fate of the writer in a modern and largely secularized democracy to be forced to contemplate this frightening image—and to be forced by his honesty to demonstrate in his work how congruent it is to the image of his personal universe.

THE FAILURE of mass culture (or high culture) to realize its potential is a matter of values, but it is also a matter of communication, which means that it is a matter of time. We are used to hearing that we all live at a faster tempo now, but too often we fail to see that the significant thing is not so much the tempo as the vastly increased number of messages the individual has to organize into patterns of meaning as a result of the tempo.

In his "The Insanity Bit" Seymour Krim writes that "We live in what for the imaginative person are truly hallucinatory times, because there is more life on every side—and the possibility of conceiving this surplus in a dizzying multitude of ways—than our inheritance and equipment enables us to deal with." But this is true in degree for persons less imaginative than Krim has in mind. People existing on all levels of imagination and sensibility must do in their heads and with their own nervous systems what business, science and government is trying desperately to do with the aid of the giant computers. The myths of mass culture perform some of the organizing functions of the computer, but as the writer sees these myths they are not only grotesquely inadequate but false to begin with, and he is left with his intolerable image of a failure that is somehow personal. For the burden peculiar to the American writer is his inability to separate his own fate from the fate of the mass.

For these reasons then it is hard to foresee, even imagine, a time when the serious writer will be more tolerant or affirmative in his attitude toward mass culture. His expectations of it are too high, his critical set toward society has too much traditional sanction behind it. Future *Esquire* symposiums are no more likely to be reassuring to the champions of mass culture than past symposiums have been. The only way to change the tune would be to select writers from a lower level of creativity. A panel composed of Herman Wouk, Jerome Weidman, Sloan Wilson and Gilbert Seldes might indeed give the general public something to cheer about.

IT MAY be objected of course that the writer's honesty is too often merely a pose behind which all sorts of self-deceptions operate; that in the name of honesty some of us are too ready to excuse inept craftsmanship, shoddy thinking, sentimentality, provincialism, coarseness, boorishness and licentiousness; that for every genuinely honest writer there are a dozen who merely ape him in a desperate effort to make something of their fundamentally impoverished personalities.

One may argue that the American writer by making a fetish of honesty has frequently succeeded only in making it clear that in art as in life generally honesty is not enough; that in the pursuit of honesty one can become entrenched in a dangerous innocence that renders most aspects of the human condition intolerable; that the American writer has so often become a pessimistic isolato whose end is futility and despair. The writer needs, one might point out, more of what Fitzgerald called the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time without losing the power to function. For without some degree of this ability the contrasts and conflicts of American life can indeed be the hell that Mr. Cheever says it is.

As to the writer's suspicion of money and the extent to which it has corrupted mass cultue, one can argue that often the real issue is the writer's fear of science, the machine and time: that the American writer, whether he knows it or not, is like the rest of us crippled by his emotional attachment to a hopelessly irrelevant pastoral ideal which he imagines society preversely to have turned its back on. Thus seen, the writer in America is hounded by the Faust legend—that ambiguous story that

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accomodates at once man's aspiration to godhood and his fear of realizing the full potential of his manhood.

Now there is something to be said for these objections; indeed, there is a great deal to be said for some of them, whether with respect to writers or Americans generally. But the point here is that in a pluralistic, affluent, message-clogged culture it is a mistake to expect the writer to relate to his society as if he were a feudal bard whose assignment was to hearten, inspire and ennoble a homogeneous people with recitations of its heroic past and mighty destiny. If the American writer often applies impossible standards to mass culture he is himself at least as often measured by impossible standards. Thus the writer in America is expected to produce "words to live by," to be a good ambassador abroad, a consolation at home, a credit to his community, and at all times a staunch defender of the comfortable illusions without which we might be forced to contemplate the emptiness of our lives.

On occasion, of course, he is expected to reprove us, not too harshly, for our less glaring shortcomings and to do this as entertainingly as possible so that we will be spared the inconvenience of taking him seriously. But he is never expected to shake the precarious ground we stand on.

Unfortunately, American writers, whatever their faults, are by nature inclined to be ground shakers. In proportion as they cease to be such, mass culture itself, with its filter-down dependence on them, will be the loser.

Our Man in the Moon

What Thurber Saw

CHARLES A. BRADY

JAMES THURBER wrote for the *New Yorker* for better than thirty-four years. Despite the contemporary critical *réclame* for the elusive Mr. Salinger, the never anything but palpable Mr. Thurber remains that magazine's first paladin in loyalty as well as genius. It was his affectionately iconoclastic hand that hymned the hero years with Ross; and he doubtless will be mourned most memorably in the columns of the famous periodical he helped build into its present pinnacle of lonely eminence among American magazines.

But though Thurber stayed throughout his life one of Eustace Tilley's boys, he was also, in a very real sense, sealed of the tribe of the celebrated Mr. Punch of 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4. If possible, the English admired him even more than we did; and surely his proudest apotheosis took place across *Punch*'s mahogany one afternoon at the end of June, 1958, at which time he became the second American to grace that table of great jesters.

Punch's first American had been Mark Twain, fifty-one years before. When, at that time Twain was invited in accordance with the sacrosanct *Punch* ritual, to cut his initials on the board—it is something humorists do in symbol all their lives—he pointed to Thackeray's stylized W.M.T. and indicated that the latter two-thirds of that signature would do for him. Unable, for all his love of dancing letters, to duplicate Twain's gesture, Thurber cut a Th alongside the incised autograph of Shirley Brooks, and, for good measure, drew a Thurber dog in the visitors' book with this muttered incantation: "I can feel Mark Twain looking over my shoulder right now." It was not just Mark Twain, as the future's critics will one day record.

Punch continued to be James Thurber's great good friend. Within this present year it paid him another tribute, on the occasion of what turned out to be his final visit to London; and this time the compliment was delivered with pencil as well as pen.

In the *Punch* drawing, one of Her Brittanic Majesty's most respectable desk-clerks is standing behind his reception-desk and speaking into a telephone: "Night clerk, yes? You thought you heard a seal bark . . . which room, please?" Just to the right of the clerk's Bond Street sleeve stands a board marked *Messages*. Letters are affixed to it. The only one visible bears, in flowing Spenserian script, the name of the addressee: *J. Thurber Esq.*

NOW IT seems to me that, in their two different ways, these *Punch* excursions into Thurberland have a great deal to tell us about the best American humorist since Mark Twain—the best one before him, too, for that

CHARLES A. BRADY is a novelist and a member of the English faculty at Canisius College, Buffalo, N. Y. His most recent book is a juvenile, *The King's Thane.*

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matter. To take the cartoon first, with its complimentary reference to the best known of Thurber's many drawings, it is clear that he is one of the few artists of our day who have contributed to what may be described as the living folklore of the present. Who can forget, once he has seen them, the homely, domesticated surrealism of the Seal in the Bedroom or of the First Mrs. Harris crouched, reproachfully, atop her bookcase?

Much more significant is the emblematic nature of the *Punch* luncheon and the illustrious ghosts who sat with Thurber round the "mahogany tree"—Henry James alone is missing of the great congeners to whom he is sib. Without any of Twain's Mississippi flood of creative energy that broke through the levee of his day's professional humor and flowed into the moonlit delta of *Huckleberry Finn*, Thurber united, in his gangling person crowned by the dandelion mop of hair, the two main streams of American humor. He carries forward the folksy, homespun vernacular tradition that is attuned to the speaking rhythms of the human voice and expresses the wisdom both of heart and belly, the tradition one may trace throughout frontier anecdote and tall story to its mountain apex in Twain, and, after Twain, in the lesser foothills of Lardner and Salinger. He also continues the urbaner tradition that comes down to us, through Franklin's *bagatelles*, the miscellaneous squibs of the Connecticut wits and Irving's *Knickerbocker*, the essays of the first Holmes, into the work of Thurber's own fellow wits on the *New Yorker*, yesterday and today.

Nor is Thackeray's shade merely a fortuitous appearance. When totting up the Thurber canon, one should never forget the really peerless work he did in the neglected field of the original fairy story. If one seeks an American analogue for this charming side of Thurber, one may always pluck Frank Stockton from the critical hat. Actually *Many Moons, The Great Quillow, The White Deer*—to single out the best of these graceful fancies—are far closer to the literary Christmas pantomimes Thackeray initiated with his *Rose and the Ring*. (There are overtones of Lear and Carroll, too, but the form is surely Thackeray's.) Yet Thackeray never turned out anything quite so perfect as the tender foolery one finds in the tale of Princess Lenore and the Jester.

This vein, though it never ran out, began to harden in *The Thirteen Clocks*, for all the incidental felicities of the "gleeping" Todal and the Golux who gives us this dictum for the police states of our day: "Never trust a spy you cannot see." As is true everywhere in the later Thurber, the Snark has become a nightmarish Boojum, and the clocks have not so much run down as speeded up too frantically. The circle is complete with the too obsessive punning of "The Great O" whose super-Joycean word-play makes not only this book but the final short pieces almost too fatiguing in their dazzling verbal fence. For most of his writing life Thurber had stalked words. Now, frighteningly, words begin to stalk him.

Thurber's range was extraordinarily wide. He was an admirable parodist—remember "What Cocktail Party" and the wicked lampooning of the Raymond Chandler school of penny dreadful in "The White Rabbit Caper"? He was a perceptive, if oblique, critic of literature, refracting rainbow intimations through the prism of his many essays—yes, he was a first-rate familiar essayist, too, as good a one as we have yet produced. I give you, among many excellent examples, "The French Far West." He wrote an in-between kind of essay, too—half formal, half familiar—which permitted him to work out as social historian, amateur of American murder, and definitive analyst of that curious Anglo-American cultural phenomenon, the soap-opera. And all these different things got set down in a precisely elegant plain style, each clause as well-placed as a drop-shot at Wimbledon or a sneak-punch in Boyle's Thirty Acres, for Thurber carried on a life-long love affair with the English language.

In addition, he was a genuine fabulist—I give you, on this head, The Bear Who Could Take It Or Leave It and the house-broken Unicorn who protected henpecked husbands instead of harassed virgins. He was, from beginning to end, but more especially in his middle period, a short story writer of unusual distinction. He was also a unique biographer and a memoirist of considerable parts—his respective high points, in this latter category, are probably the rather late *Thurber Album* and the very early *My Life and Hard Times*, which may well turn out to have been his masterpieces.

AS AN ARTIST James Thurber was something new under the sun. One may always cite Edward Lear, of course, but the resemblance is very, very distant. Thurber's wedding of picture and letterpress is as close as anyone can get to a new art form that is, at one and the same time, a primitivist doodle and an ultra-sophisticated pronunciamento delivered by a moralist, more resigned than angry, on our Age of Anxiety.

Lovers of *My Life and Hard Times* will recall the Thurber of World War I as a most indifferent soldier. On one front, however, the one where is fought out the perpetually drawn battle between the sexes, he was the premier male strategist of our generation.

The difference between man and woman remains one of the oldest and best jokes of nature's devising; and a tradition in English letters as old as *The Canterbury Tales*. Thurber's contribution to the logistics of this struggle is as immortal as Chaucer's. It is, moreover, aided and abetted by such important discoveries as Thurber's Law which has it that there is no safety in numbers or in anything else, and that the claw of the sea puss gets us all in the end.

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This same jauntily pessimistic acceptance of the worst grew perceptibly darker toward the end. As is the way of merrymen everywhere, Jamie Thurber tended, year by year, toward a modulated kind of "moping mum." The moral darkness he saw spreading everywhere did not, however, impair his love of life any more than had the physical blindiness which had struck so tragically early in his career. Nor did it chill his warm affection for his own past.

Besides London and New York, the cities Thurber loved best were Paris and Columbus, Ohio, where, sixty-six years ago Jamie Thurber was born to the mother he loved as well and immortalized as vividly as Barrie had Margaret Ogilvy. It is not the least of Thurber's achievements that Columbus, Ohio, is now, for readers in many languages, a thing of faerie, an enchanted wood wherein Bottom may not have loved Titania but where the youthful Thurber serving out his brief political career, once saw a ballot scrawled against Woodrow Wilson with the angry words: *A bas le professeur!*

LIKE THE Henry James whom he admired and wrote about, and whose scrupulous artistry he emulated, there are really three James Thurbers: James I of *My Life and Hard Times* and the fine frenzy of the early pieces; James II of the famous drawings and the wonderful short stories; and James III—never, however, an Old Pretender—of the brittlely brilliant final pieces.

In his two latest published pieces—one for the *New Yorker,* the other for the *Times Literary Supplement*—Thurber expressed a somber conviction that the future of humor and comedy was at best a "cryptic" one, because they "require for existence, a brave spirit and a high heart, and where do you find these" in our "present era of Science and *Angst*?" Well, we found them in this valiant blind man whose mournful-eyed, huge-eared seeing-eye dogs of the mind will continue to guide us through today's ever-spreading Waste Land of no-humor for a good long time to come.

Thurber also pointed out that the "*Zeitgeist* is not crazy as a loon or mad as a March hare; it is manic as a man"—and now the manic is in the Moon! But there was another side of the Moon for Thurber. We see it, too, when, in his gentlest avatar as Court Jester, he tucks in Princess Lenore, content with the little golden moon on her necklace, and winks at the great silver orb, "for it seemed to the court Jester that the moon had winked at him."

Let our day's great panjandrums go on fretting us, if they insist: the Wizards, the Mathematicians, the Chamberlains, and the Kings, with their lunatic lunar trajectories. Our man in the moon, James Thurber, is worth the whole mad pack of them.

A New Generation

Puerto Rico's Angry Poets

RICHARD J. CALLAN

THE TRADITION of poet-politicians is one of long-standing with Latin Americans. Among their men of letters, many have also been men of action, sometimes holding the reins of government, sometimes laying plans for overthrowing it. Thus in Puerto Rico the present governor was known as poet and writer in his youth, and among the Puerto Rican Nationalists at least three poets suffered imprisonment for their activities.

Not so the new generation of writers. In spite of the ideal they share of national independence, they join no political parties and keep their grievances as grist for their creative writing. Consequently, to read their work is to catch a more accurate glimpse of some aspects of Puerto Rican life than one can from the glowing accounts issued by the public relations office.

RICHARD J. CALLAN is a member of the Spanish department at St. Michael's College, Winooski, Vermont.

This literary group consists of men who are mostly in their thirties. Primarily they are short story writers although some have also written an occasional novel or play. Regardless of their age, what distinguishes them from earlier writers is a subtler craftsmanship, demanding creative interpretation from the reader, and a deeper penetration of the protagonists' mental process and feelings as affected by the aching problems of emigration, industrialization, poverty.

Where previous fiction portrayed social problems, the interest of younger writers in Puerto Rico now centers on man's metaphysical search for identity in his chaotic world. What they do have in common with other major Puerto Rican authors of this century is their pessimistic tone, and their effort to define and preserve the distinct personality of the Puerto Rican.

René Marqués, the leader of this group by virtue of

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his versatile energy, is himself primarily a dramatist, although he too has been successful as a short story writer. Two of his plays are deemed to be among the best in Latin America. He studied playwriting in Madrid and, with a Rockefeller grant, at Columbia University. Later a Guggenheim was awarded him so that he could write a novel, which he did.

In his home town Arecibo, Marqués organized a Pro Arte Theater company and in San Juan he founded the Experimental Theater group. He was also co-founder there of a unique book club which undertook to publish four novels a year for its members, in an effort to solve one of the major problems faced by Puerto Rican writers, who have no way of publishing except by sending their manuscripts to Mexico, New York or Madrid, or by financing the printing themselves, thus drastically limiting the circulation to a group of friends. (This lamentable situation is common throughout Latin America; books go out of print within weeks of their first appearance.) The club managed to produce five books, but early this year it died for lack of support.

Marqués' literary work, reflecting his personality, is vigorous and outspoken in an atmosphere where pussyfooting and mutual admiration is good form. He describes himself as a cheerful but basically indignant man who has a bone to pick with the world, and whose chief preoccupation in life, besides his children, is that his compatriots shall achieve national sovereignty. As a result he is no admirer of Governor Muñoz Marín who has succeeded in frustrating the intellectuals' hopes for emancipation.

THE TITLE designating Puerto Rico's status, *Estado Libre Asociado* (literally, Free Associated State, but officially translated as Commonwealth), is a source of considerable caustic comment among Puerto Rican writers. While the average man may be satisfied to see the word "Libre" there at all, the intellectuals insist that if it is to have any meaning, freedom is a word that cannot be qualified.

In truth, there are circumstances where the weight of Uncle Sam's protecting arm has been heavy, such as in the matter of Vieques. More than half the area of this once fertile island was taken over by the U.S. Navy in 1938 for Marine maneuvers, forcing the evacuation of the farmers. The rest of the island, demoralized by the prolonged military occupation, appears to have been deliberately kept in a state of underdevelopment and poverty in order that activities like commerce or tourism shall not impede or disrupt the maneuvers. How this looks to Puerto Rican eyes may be seen in Pedro Juan Soto's moving novel, *Usmaíl,* which describes the situation of the Vieques islanders and the warped life of a waif who grew up there.

The titles these Puerto Rican writers choose often reveal their bitterness. Soto, for example, has a collection of short stories about Puerto Ricans in New York; it is called significantly *Spiks.* Another collection, this by Emilio Díaz Valcárcel and entitled *The Useless Blood* is made up of stories based on the author's experience as a soldier in Korea. As the stories testify, not only did Puerto Ricans feel they were in a war that did not concern them, but they found themselves in the army where many suffered for the first time the full blast of Yankee discrimination and prejudice against "foreigners," spending their service in a double exile.

PUERTO RICAN intellectuals fall roughly into two ideological camps, reconcilable when moderate: the cultural universalists and the supporters of national culture. Creative writers have tended to be cultural nationalists. They would explore the sources and development of the culture that formed them because, even if it was not as rich as might be desired, it is the one that must serve as a basis upon which to build their future.

In their work these writers fix their sights on themselves, in order to find out what it means to be Puerto Rican. They set themselves to analyze Puerto Rican reality and to define their collective purpose and identity as a people, in order to determine within that framework their course in the modern world. They feel that as Latin Americans they can never comfortably fit into Anglo-American cultural patterns which are in many respects directly antagonistic to their temperament and natural expression. And they feel that they should not be asked to do so.

The influence of the United States was bound to be felt on Puerto Rico, of course, as it is everywhere in the hemisphere, but this island has long been subjected to a deliberate program of Americanization and practically cut off from all other intercourse for the past sixty years. As René Marqués points out, however, you can't take philosophicial, economic or sociological formulas that were prepared for the welfare of one people, transplant them in another country where circumstances and native idiosyncrasies are sharply different, and expect anything but intellectual confusion. Marqués blames repeated attempts to do this for the sense of inadequacy and the mental stagnation that he discerns in his countrymen. As he sees it, the Puerto Ricans are a proud and retiring people whose peaceable disposition is lapsing into a state of abulia as a result of the contradictory pressures of their own normal ways and of the official propaganda.

This thesis can be seen in literary form in several short stories. *"Interlude"* by José Luis Vivas, for example, is about a ragpicker who lives alone and withdrawn at the municipal dump, wandering among the rubbish as part of it, his past forgotten and his present unpondered.

An interlude in the ragpicker's existence begins

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when a small boy from across the highway comes over and befriends him. The man starts to speak again, old forgotten words coming from his rusty throat, and his mind begins to function. When the child is away he searches in the rubbish for trinkets to show the boy, and he finds himself weaving stories around a broken fan, a piece of mirror to entertain his guest. But one day as the little boy is running across the highway, he is hit by a car.

At this point an impotent rage fills and darkens the ragpicker's mind and he wants to run and howl and kill. But he does nothing. He just stands there and finally he turns away from the scene without thinking, without knowing, to resume his ragpicking—symbolizing the Puerto Rican who is harassed by conflicting forces and ideas in his public and political life, and so slips into a defensive apathy, standing by mutely when he should shout and remonstrate.

In *"The Black Bull"* Abelardo Díaz Alfaro writes of a restless little Spanish bull raised for breeding purposes, describing his reaction when a husky American bull is introduced on the ranch to improve the stock. In a long head-on struggle, the black bull wounds and defeats the bigger one; nevertheless the new bull remains to supplant him.

The black bull resists being yoked and charges around the ranch, alone and defiant; but he soon loses his arrogance and one day he disappears. Eventually he is discovered dead at the bottom of a ravine where in rage and despair he had thrown himself; or so surmises the ranch hand who had raised him and who identifies himself with the animal in its helpless moral overthrow within its own domain.

WHILE TODAY's writers question the ultimate value of any achievement, economic or otherwise, as long as it is not preceded by independence, the government of Muñoz Marín has chosen to devote its attention to social matters. But here too it is charged with having neglected long-ranged planning.

Many intellectuals point out that Puerto Rico is essentially agricultural and that the great majority of Puerto Ricans are farmers. Instead of developing the economy along these lines, they argue, the government has sponsored an artificial and marginal industrialization, which will collapse as soon as employers, who have been attracted from the mainland by low wages and no taxes, have to face pay scales comparable to those in the United States. Meanwhile the peasants, driven by hunger and hope to the cities, pour into the appalling slums in search of work, or travel on to New York where more disillusions await them.

This is the burden of a play by Marqués that ran in New York, Madrid and San Juan, "The Ox Cart." A family of once prosperous peasants goes down from the mountains to the slum, ironically called "La Perla," that clings like a barnacle to the ramparts of San Juan. They leave the soil that no longer sustains them with many misgivings, with the exception of Luis, the eldest son and breadwinner, who is convinced that farming is degrading and that the future lies with industry. But the evils of slum-living take their toll of each one of them: rape, unemployment, delinquency. The family moves on again, this time to New York, where Luis gets what he was yearning for, work in a factory and money, or at least enough to start buying on the installment plan. But then a factory accident kills Luis, and in the end his mother and sister make their decision to return to the soil they had abandoned and to which they now know they belong.

THE TRANSFER to Puerto Rico of the standards and mores of the American acquisitive society is encouraged by the present government as part and parcel of prosperity, industrial development and social betterment. To the literary group, however, it is more like the prostitution of their country's dignity and honor.

Puerto Rican writers charge that by disregarding intellectual and moral values, the government has contributed to denaturing the personality of the Puerto Rican. Official emphasis, they say, is constantly on material prosperity—a prosperity, moreover, not based on Puerto Rican reality, which is poor, but borrowed from their wealthy "protector." What the government should do, they argue, is use its unquestionable prestige to foster the taste of a public which does have the traditional Spanish American reverence for cultural matters, for poetry, music, beauty.

Here in all justice it should be noted that under governmental sponsorship the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, founded in 1955, has recently inaugurated programs of cultural education throughout the island. These include touring concert orchestras, ballet and theater companies, a traveling museum, restoration of historic monuments, art classes and contests, and publication of an elegant quarterly review (printed in Spain). The work of the Institute is good—good enough that it has even elicited the incredulous praise of René Marqués, along with the suggestion that this may be the one accomplishment of a permanent nature in Puerto Rico today.

A good many younger Puerto Rican writers would agree with Marqués. They do not pretend to have the answers to the island's industrial, agricultural or educational problems, which must be handled by specialists; what they do claim is insight into their people's psychological requirements and hence of the lines along which their needs may best be met. Their suggested rule-of-thumb for experts is simple enough: that in planning for the development of Puerto Rico they give some consideration to the temperament and real wishes of the Puerto Rican himself.

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A Story

The Christmas Wreath

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN

IT WAS very cold today; tonight, though actually it must be colder, there seems more warmth, because the snow is still falling thickly and consequently the house has a sheltered air. I can see the gold wedge of my light, thrown through the window, on the snow by the box-bush; at twelve it's always quiet here, but this is snow-quiet.

It wasn't snowing yet when I drove the Ladies out to Pine Mount early this afternoon. The sky had a tight hard look, and the cold was the Baltimore kind that goes through flesh like a knife.

The Ladies were carrying wreaths to decorate the place for the Christmas party; big springy circles of greens with gilded cones and bells; some of them were sprinkled with artificial snow and had satin-soft bows of red ribbon.

There was so much of the stuff in the back of the station-wagon where a seat had been taken out, that when we got to the parking-lot by the broken fountain, Miss Raney who had the most confidence (though they all had quite a lot), stopped a patient who was going back to the kitchens and asked him to help. I suppose she thought if he was going to the kitchens alone, it must be all right.

He was delighted. His slack lips drew back from his big yellow teeth and his little eyes honestly shone. We all loaded up with wreaths, but the man took the most, and we carried them all the way up the ramp of the dingy corridor to the small room at the head, by the nurse's desk. Theoretically, the driver isn't supposed to have anything to do with that part, but I couldn't sit and freeze in the station-wagon, and it seemed stupid to mince along under nothing but the weight of my car keys.

Pine Mount was like most of those places—clean where scrubbing would do it, and dirty where only paint and money would help. When we got to the top of the ramp the man didn't want to put down his wreaths—he wanted to go right on carrying them somewhere else—but Miss Raney was there with a hand on his shoulder, crying, "We can't monopolize you! How do you know people aren't out there just *waiting* for your help?" It was effective, anyway. He dropped the wreaths just there and loped off down the ramp toward the parking-lot.

THE NURSE at the desk had blue eyes in a tidy face; she said, "Driver, wouldn't you like to wait in the reading room? It shouldn't take the Ladies more than an hour to distribute."

I could imagine that the reading room was the pick of the rooms I might have entered, and I said, yes, thank you, and she called a snubnosed nurse with a comfortable air who was thumb-tacking notices onto a plywood bulletin-board and said, "Take this lady to the reading room, will you, Miss Ertz?"

Miss Ertz unlocked a corridor-door with a key from the bunch at her waist and we went past more locked corridor doors to a glass door which swung free. We went through that, and down a hall which looked as though it had been painted in the last five years. You could hear people talking in the distance, and a radio was going somewhere—a quiz program, with periodic roars of remote laughter. Miss Ertz stopped and pointed. "To your right," she said. "That little room to your right. Just beyond Women."

She went back briskly, humming to herself. I kept on down the hall and turned into the doorway she had shown me. The reading room looked good to me at first, by contrast. It had curtains, which toned down the bars, and a red leather chair and a potted orange-tree. It was warm, too; there was a smell of steam and a little hissing sound. Rows of the book shelves went round the walls, but they were about half-empty and most of the books looked beat-up. Only one person was in the room, a stout young man, in a straight-back chair near the orange tree.

He had a comic bok open on his lap, but he wasn't looking at it. He was obviously a patient, though a top-echelon patient. I wondered why he didn't sit in the easy chair; but when I took off my trench-coat and sat there myself, it was easier to understand. Every spring was hysterical.

Somehow I didn't like to get up again, so I took out a cigarette and lit it and sat there watching the smoke attentively. The fat young man's attitude never altered. He just stared at an invisible point; about the time I finished my first cigarette he got up, placed the comic book carefully on a lower shelf and went out.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN, who contributes frequently to these pages, writes criticism as well as poetry and short stories.

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I COULD still hear, more faintly, the quiz program and the unspontaneous laughter; the steam hissed a little and now and then voices swelled for a minute as a door opened or shut. I got up to get a book and actually got one, with a bright blue binding, but when my fingers closed on it I didn't want it.

I'm no good at that kind of place; I'd have happily left when Miss Raney put her hand on the man's shoulder and sent him out to the broken fountain. I sat down again, still in the sprung chair as though I had a license to use it, and looked at the orange tree. It was hanging on, but it had had it; the tips of the leaves were rust-colored and the two wizened oranges were arrested. It was, somehow, a funny thing to see there. The tropical touch it was supposed to give the room had gone sour—that Valencia gold had left only its mummy.

I hadn't opened the book, but my hands held it; for some reason the right hand had grease on it where I'd tested the emergency after I took off my glove. Maybe that's why I decided to wash it. Anyway, like the fat young man, I replaced my unread matter carefully and went out into the hall and opened the door marked Women.

Hot air and a smell of disinfectant shut me in. Miss Ertz was standing by the closed door of one of the toilets with an annoyed, patient look on her fresh face. The doors of the toilets had no fastening, but this one was closed tight. When Miss Ertz saw me she raised her eyebrows and drew down the corners of her mouth, indicating semi-humorous outrage.

"Now come on, Lily," she said, addressing the invisible occupant. I tilted the glass soap-holder and let the cold yellow slime cup in my palm.

"She's got it tied with a piece of string," softly said Miss Ertz in her small capable voice. "I could *crash* it, of course," she added, "but that would frighten her, and she'd sulk all day. Lily, will you come on out now?"

I soaped my hands and watched in the mirror. There was a shuffling noise and below the door I could see a pair of down-at-the-heels brown pumps shifting stubbornly, as though someone on the other side were silently listening.

"Lily!" said Miss Ertz with a new briskness in her voice, "if you *don't* come out, you can't possibly go to the carol-sing tonight." She said to me softly—though dropping her voice seemed a technicality as we were all within six feet of each other—"She hates noise. I'll have to make a noise. I don't like to." I dried my hands on a paper towel that let the water run miserably up my wrist, smiled hastily at Miss Ertz and opened the heavy hall door. As it whooshed slowly behind me I could hear Miss Ertz begin a sharp tattoo on the fastened door with her knuckles.

When I turned back into the reading room it was occupied. A visitor (or a staff-member?) had joined my wait; a pretty girl in a black dress and red pumps was sitting in the straight chair by the window, reading. Though I certainly hadn't thought I needed her, I was glad she was there. *I* can't read when someone near me is just sitting, so I got out a notebook and a pencil-stub from my purse and began to jot down some last minute Christmas chores.

THE ROOM was very quiet—just the little hissing sound from the steam and the busyness of my pencil-stub. When I finished my list it was so quiet that I was bothered; I realized that it was taking the girl a long time to read a page, then that she wasn't reading. She—as a matter of quick glance—was looking past the arrested orange tree, through the bars to the frozen lawn. Her expression was cheerful to the point of anticipation.

Suddenly she turned her head and caught my eyes squarely. "Is it going to snow?" she asked. Her voice was attractive, but the accent was genteel.

"Any minute," I said.

"I hope it snows for Christmas," said the girl. "I'm going home day after tomorrow—Christmas Eve."

I could feel the surprise printed helplessly across my face. "That's nice," I said. If I'd had a week to think, I still wouldn't have known the proper response. Now, of course, with hindsight, I thought I noticed what I'd missed: the pressed-down eagerness, the careful dignity.

She looked through the window and smiled; her smile had an extraordinary sweetness. It seemed to me that her imminent departure sent a breath of good air through the jaunty bitter little room. "At three-thirty, day after tomorrow, I'm on my way home," she said. "My boy friend's coming to get me." I couldn't repeat "That's nice." I smiled back at her and her face brightened abruptly. Still I could not really see her here; I had so immediately placed her among the free. There was a look of soft injury about her, though; she made me think of a bruised peach.

"Christmas list?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "I thought I was through, but you never are, are you?"

Struck by something, the girl sat forward and looked at me tentatively. "I wonder," she said, "if you could possibly do me a big favor?" I made an encouraging sound. "Well," she said, "really, I have a problem." She wore drop rhinestone ear-rings and the one nearest me was missing its center stone. "Being here," she said rapidly with a small embarrassed smile, "I haven't gotten a chance to do anything, and trying to shop Christmas Eve. . . ." Her eyes held on to mine with a sort of horrified shyness. "I was wondering if you could *possibly* phone Hutzler when you get home, and order some things for me—to be sent—so's they'd get there in time for Christmas?"

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"Well . . ." I said. "I don't see why not." I saw very clearly why not, having no illusions as to my desk-officer's reaction. There didn't seem to be the slightest reason for anyone's knowing. You could see the tissue-paper wrappings bringing the whole bright world. "They could be charged," the girl went on quickly. "I could make out a list now, and I'd certainly greatly appreciate it. I haven't a thing to wear," she added; she looked down at the spotted black dress. Suddenly it seemed to me very exciting that this should happen today; it seemed, as a matter of fact, absolutely wonderful.

"I'm sure I'll be home before the store closes," I said. "You should get the things by Christmas Eve morning—afternoon, I mean." I took my pad and pencil-stub over to her and she reached for them with a sort of tender caution.

I WENT back to my crazy springs and she began to scribble earnestly, balancing the pad on her knee. Every now and then she would stop for a second and stare through the orange tree leaves to the barred window. I lit a cigarette and figured my chances of getting home before five-thirty. It had become very important. I figured that if the worst came to the worst, I could call from a pay-station after I dropped the last of my Ladies.

The pencil stopped. The girl stared at her list for a minute, came over and handed it to me. "I don't know if you can read it," she said. "My writing's awful." She smelt faintly of perspiration and cheap powder. Close up, the prettiness of her face dissolved, like an oil-painting held close to the eyes. She read off, as my eyes followed the words:

1 Black petticoat, horsehair ruffles
1 Cup-bra, size 34—(cut low under the arms)
1 Ceinture belt
2 Peasant skirts
4 Scoop-neck blouses
6 pair sheer hose, size 9½
1 pair red high-heeled slippers, double A size 7

I could feel her breath on my neck; looking up I saw her eyes dilated as a child's with pleasure.

"All right," I said. "We'll be taking a chance on the skirts. And any particular color for the blouses? And who do I charge them to?"

She straightened up and looked at me. "Charge them to my boy friend," she said. "He's a great artist. He wants to give me the things for Christmas." We looked at each other. "Those things I wrote," she said, and she smiled brilliantly at me, and with the smile the pretty face recomposed itself. Suddenly she said with great rapidity: "And some furs. And jewels. And some real good perfumes. And charge it to Great Artist, Norwalk, Conn."

There was quite a long pause. Her soft, round, bruised-peach face watched me; the defective earring swung slightly.

"All right," I said. I had no idea how it sounded; evidently not too well. She drew back a little. "You're going to do it, aren't you?" she said. "You told me. You said so."

"I'll do my best," I said. I got up and for a minute there didn't seem to be a doorway anywhere. "Well goodbye," I said.

"Merry Christmas," she said, and smiled and watched me. "You'll do it, won't you?"

Like a parrot I said, "My very best." I went out of the room and down the hall, with my coat over my arm and the crumpled list in my hand. The tones of my desk officer ticked off in my mind like those level, uncadenced calls in a hospital which repeat, "Dr. Forbush, Dr. Forbush, Dr. Alan Forbush": *"Of course you understand that at no time whatsoever do you take any communication given you by a patient out of an institution; hand it directly to the attendant, even if it is about her. Whether you like it or not. It's very important for the sake . . ."*

I went through the glass door and down the long hall. There was no one at the desk. I stood there for a moment, but no one came. I put on my coat and buckled the belt. Still no one in sight. I took a nice deep breath and crumpled the list. As I did so Miss Ertz came up the ramp from the outside door; I could see a little cluster of people she had admitted. I got out the list and smoothed it. "Miss Ertz," I said. "A patient gave me this. In the reading-room."

Without looking at me she extended a quick hand, glancing at the empty desk and down the hall. "O. K.," she said. "I'll look at it later. Thanks. Know who she was?"

"A dark girl," I said. "Pretty. Has on a black dress and red pumps."

She smiled. "Oh, Lenz. A shopping list?"

I nodded and went down the ramp. Halfway, I flattened against the wall, meeting the arriving group. Up the incline was being led an old, old woman, with thin, cotton-white hair. Her face was emaciated, with a great hooked nose and terrible black eyes. It was set, like a mask of implacable rage and grief. "Just a few more feet, Auntie," said the pale plump girl who had her arm, and behind came an embarrassed, kind-looking man in a brown suit. The old woman, like an ancient, yellow-taloned, wounded eagle, glared and crept.

OUTSIDE across the cement yard and over the parked cars, snowflakes had started to float. It was already dusk. I walked over to the station-wagon and got in. I turned up my coat-collar and put my hands in my pockets. The snowflakes were still melting as they struck the ground, but I noticed that a few were be-

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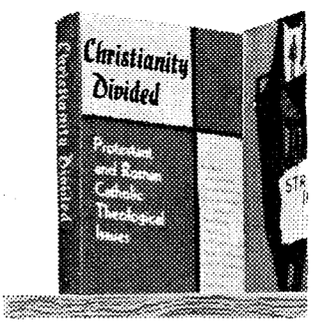

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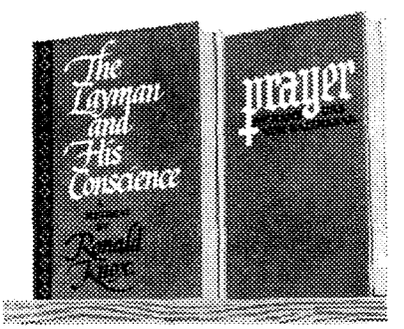

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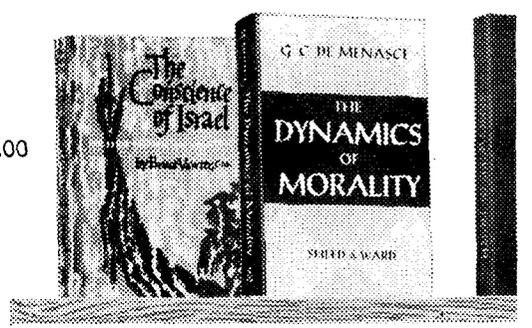

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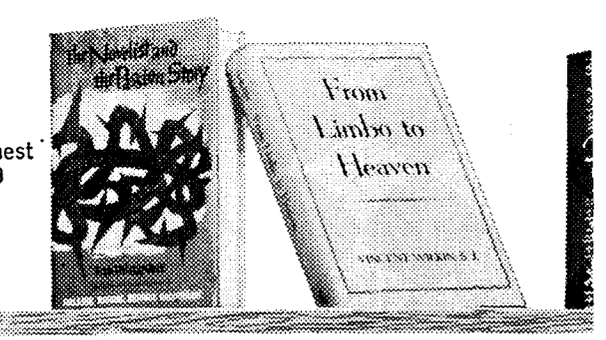

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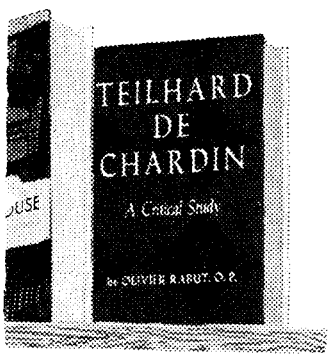

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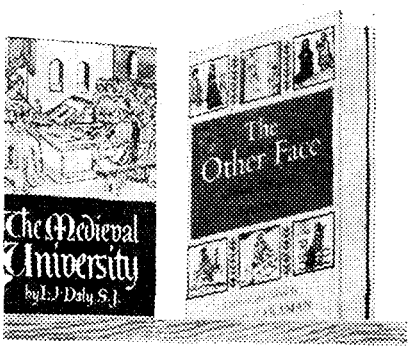

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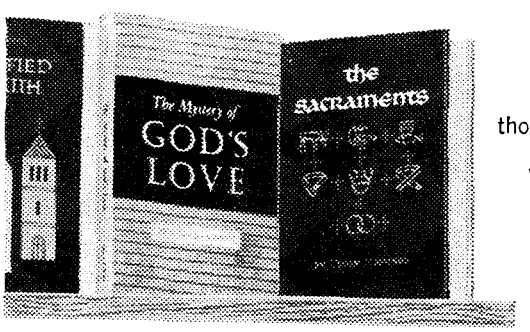

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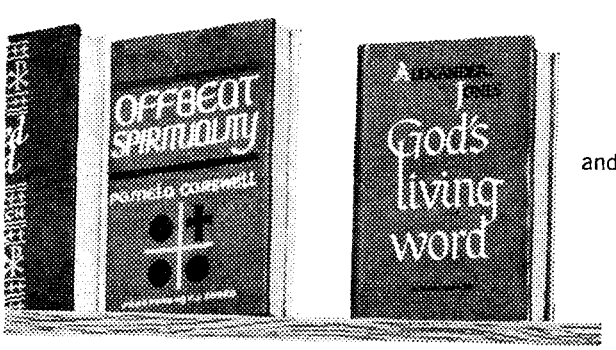

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ginning to lie on the mat of dead leaves in the bowl of the fountain.

The building bulked very solid and very gray. As I sat hunched behind the wheel, two white-sleeved arms appeared at a window almost opposite, lowering a big wreath, evidently on cord. It had a huge bow; it swung a little; then the arms withdrew and it hung still. The bars quartered its bright green-and-red circle. And by some queer sudden movement, as though the ground beneath the station-wagon had shifted, altering every proportion just a little, its broken circle seemed to me beautiful and strong and appropriate.

THE SCREEN

Tomorrow and Tomorrow

AT THE BEGINNING of "Throne of Blood," the Japanese film based on *Macbeth,* the audience may find itself playing a game. They may try to match Shakespeare's poetry to the beautiful visuals on the screen. Later, except in certain scenes where the famous Shakespeare lines fit so patently, the viewer is likely to become so impressed with the movie—especially its good acting, fascinating costumes, foggy forests and stark interiors—that he will forget the original play. Instead, he is more likely to concentrate on this version of the rise and fall of a warrior driven by a calculating wife and his own lust for power.

Akira Kurosawa, the director who first won Americans to Japanese films in a big way with his "Rashomon" in 1952, continued to attract attention with movies like "Ikiru" ("To Live!") and "The Seven Samurai." "Throne of Blood" should enhance his reputation. Set during the civil wars in fifteenth-century Japan, this version of the gory Scottish tale is even more gory than Shakespeare's. Wild-eyed Toshiro Mifune as Taketoki (Macbeth) wields a mean sword, and after he and Takamaru Sasaki, his fellow general (Banquo), encounter the weird witch in the forest, this Japanese Macbeth starts taking the bloody road to the throne.

In the tradition of the classical Noh theatre, the film uses only one witch, who is shown spinning a web of doom as she makes her predictions of the generals' prosperous futures; also in the Noh tradition, Isuzu Yamada as Asaji (Lady Macbeth) wears a chalky white make-up that suggests a woman's mask as she, like the weird witch, spins an unholy plot to further her husband's career. And "Throne of Blood" makes Taketoki's wife tougher and even more diabolic than Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth. After she tells her husband she is pregnant, it is she who arranges the murder of Banquo.

Obviously "Throne of Blood" is not for the delicate; and its beautifully-photographed finale with Taketoki-

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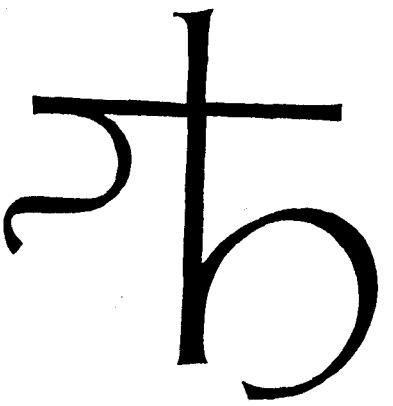
Macbeth being shot full of arrows by his own men as the forest moves toward his castle may make even stout-hearted men cringe. In any case, Kurosawa's picture is historically rewarding as well as dramatically exciting.

FRANCE has also sent over an off-beat film. But "Zazie," produced and directed by Louis Malle who also collaborated on the script, is so off-beat that most audiences won't know what to make of it. Stemming from Raymond Queneau's satirical novel, *Zazie dans le Metro*, the movie is a crazy, harum-scarum affair about an eleven-year-old from the provinces who visits her uncle for three days in Paris. Her gutter language and advanced but misunderstood concepts don't shock her uncle so much as his neighbors and the Parisians she encounters when she runs away.

The child herself, sort of a combination of Eloise and that original nincompoop in "The Moon Is Blue," gets rather tiresome, but director Malle isn't so much interested in her as he is in visualizing her misconceptions of the adult world. And his visualizations consist mainly of a series of lampoons on movies—from American westerns and slapstick comedies to sophisticated and sexy French and Italian items. Some of the gags are very amusing, but most of them don't quite come off and aren't really as funny as Malle thinks. His cast (no big names) seems to be having a hilarious time, and some of their humor is contagious; but I wish Malle would have realized that there's a law of diminishing returns in slapstick—and while one pie in the face is funny, the sixth or seventh pie wears out the joke. Anyway, the finale, after all the wacky satire and cinematic clowning, is quite clever. Mama, on the train home, asks Zazie what she did; and the worn-out child answers, "I mellowed."

ANOTHER, but much more thoughtful view of a girl's mellowing is to be found in the English film, "Loss of Innocence," which is based on Rumer Godden's sensitive novel, *The Greengage Summer*. Delicately photographed in colors suitable to the sweet-sad story, the picture is set in the Marne Valley and champagne country of France, where this girl is vacationing with her two younger sisters and little brother while their mother is in the hospital.

It is an eventful summer for this sixteen-year-old girl who is exposed, with no mother to guide her, to the vicissitudes of the adult world. Nicely played by Susannah York, the girl is shy, touchy, bold, yearning, sensible and foolish in her reactions to the people around her: Kenneth More as the debonair jewel thief who wanders in and out of the handsome, made-over chateau where most of the action takes place, Danielle Darrieux as More's mistress who runs the chateau and has cause for a slight case of jealousy when her man is attracted to the girl, Claude Nollier as Danielle's partner who is at-



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tracted to Danielle and David Saire as the house boy who brutally attacks the girl. The end to all this is quite touching.

But most amazing of all, thanks to the screenplay Howard Koch wrote from the Godden novel and Lewis Gilbert's direction of the good cast, the girl seems to grow to womanhood right before your eyes. The process of growing up may be painful, but it is the most natural thing in the world. PHILIP T. HARTUNG

THE STAGE

The Off-Broadway Murder Case

WHAT A distance for better or worse there is between the average play in print and on the stage. And how much greater is the distance likely to be when the stage is an off-Broadway one. Several years ago Eric Bentley wrote, concerning the languishing state of the theater, that if Broadway tended to do trivial things well, off-Broadway did important things badly. If anything, the situation seems to have become worse; the acting, directing and general professional quality of the commercial theater is of a robust, if hermetic, excellence this season, while off-Broadway exhibits one embarrassment after another. And one of the chief ways in which we are embarrassed is by the spectacle of blatant infidelity to the nature and intentions of particular dramas. Infidelity, not merely ineptitude. The latter is forgivable, if painful to see; the former seals up the gates of mercy.

"The Automobile Graveyard" is an extreme case in point. This two-act drama by the young Spanish playwright Arrabal is not a masterpiece nor is it quite the "astonishing" work that the publishers of its printed version claim it to be. But it is certainly an impressive piece of theater, full of wild energy and black humor, bitterness, mockery and terror, and an innocent despair of the kind felt by children, who cannot fathom either the suffering they undergo or which they themselves cause. In short, it is original and distinctive, with dimension and a multiple life, an infinitely worthier play than the gaseous or obese psychological or sociological dramas that abound in our theater of safety and repetition.

At least that is the opinion of one reader of the published play. But as staged at the 41st St. Theatre, as directed and performed there in the first New York presentation of any of Arrabal's work, "The Automobile Graveyard" became a travesty of itself, having been rendered almost unrecognizable, having been, deliberately and obscenely, murdered. Not since I saw Lorca's "Blood Wedding" mangled on the stage of some tiny theater in the Village a few years ago have I been present at so thorough and unrelieved, so perversely ritualistically thorough and unrelieved a misreading and misstaging of a play. And that includes David Ross's unhappy "Ghosts" of this season.

It is doubtful if the cast, with one or two exceptions, had enough basic professional competence to handle even a much less demanding task (the feminine lead, for example, lacked the very rudiments of the actor's craft). But what made it impossible for them to give us even a crude approximation of the play's life was a directorial intention that was opposed at almost every turn to that of the author.

The spirit of "The Automobile Graveyard" is one of dream, more nearly nightmare; but not loose or impressionistic, nothing Saroyanesque about it, rather something sharp and agitated though controlled, with the clean, fatal, adamant lines of an obsession and the intellectual innocence of a child's universe—a real child not a theatrical one—in which there are no such things as symbols, only images of greater or lesser splendor or frightfulness.

What director Herbert Machiz has done to Arrabal's

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fable of madness, terror, brutality and beleaguered hope, a fable whose avowed or unacknowledged roots are in Beckett, the Marquis de Sade, Brecht and Alfred Jarry, is dissipate its obsessive energy, convert its dark wit into slapstick, construct symbols out of its irreducibly unsymbolic texture and in general deliver up a shapeless, self-contradictory and self-defeating work. On a textual level, for instance, he has made a number of changes, all in the direction of his conception of the play as cocky, ultra-contemporary and beat—something by Gregory Corso—whereas it is actually agonized, unlocalized in time, and "absurd," that is to say, interested in creation by radical inversions and mockery and not in representations of attitudes.

To further his notion he has had the three musicians who constitute the drama's center play rock 'n roll where the text calls for a "Louis Armstrong blues"—surely a very different thing—and has, in his rapacious desire for the timeliest posturings, introduced a number called "Graveyard Twist." Again, because "The Automobile Graveyard" is on one of its levels a retelling of Christ's Passion, he has seen fit to add to the parallels, which Arrabal displays with the utmost naiveté and casualness (the effect being, incidentally to relieve the play of its potentially blasphemous character), one egregious instance being an elaborate "last supper" where the text had merely indicated that the characters are to eat peanuts.

I have not space to list all the points at which director Machiz stuck his ragged-edged sword into the body of Arrabal's play. But there is still an opportunity, which I won't forego, to mention that in a few places something survived. One was due to Kim Swado's properly surrealist and strident, almost poster-colored, set. The other was to be found in two performances: those of Harry Basch as Milos, the valet and waiter who presides over the auto graveyard whose wrecks are inhabited by men and women who simply go on doing what humanity cannot refrain from doing while around them unfolds terror and the death of innocence; and of Estelle Parsons as Lasca.

Miss Parsons especially struck me as understanding what the play was about. She tried to give to her role its intended quality of controlled and yet violent derangement, of Berlin-circa-1925 smokiness and neurotic mythology, of cruelty and erotic, actually sado-masochistic, fury, all of it of a direct, apparitional intensity, as of a child's unmeliorated vision. She tried to avoid naturalism so as to step out larger-than-life, like the sort of mask-at-the window which is one aspect of what Arrabal sees. She tried, in short, to exist at a point halfway between the recognizable and the fabulous, the psychological and apocalyptic. That she succeeded as well as she did is a tribute to her insubordinate nature, considering the orders that must have been issued by her sergeant.

RICHARD GILMAN

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Critics' Choices for Christmas

PHILIP DEASY

Mémoires Intérieurs. By François Mauriac. Trans. by G. Hopkins. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $4.75. Early in this book François Mauriac tells why he is reluctant to write a formal autobiography. What he then provides for the reader, however, is even happier: a picture of himself as reflected in the reading of a lifetime. M. Mauriac's commentary is as much a rich and moving revelation of himself as it is of those authors with whom, as he says, "all my living springs communicate."

The Schools. By Martin Mayer. Harper. $4.95. Since that first sputnik in October, 1957, education has been very much in the news. To find out just what are the conditions that prevail in elementary and secondary schools both here and abroad, Mr. Mayer did an amazing amount of legwork, visitations to classrooms, and interviewing. What he discovered is here put together with superb professional skill and in a style many removes from educationists' jargon.

Leo XIII and The Modern World. Edited by Edward T. Gargan. Sheed and Ward. $4.50. *Mater et Magister,* Pope John XXIII's seventieth anniversary continuation of *Rerum Novarum* has already provoked controversy even, or especially, among American Catholics. *Leo XIII and the Modern World,* ten essays by a group of American scholars, affords much insight into the man who started it all by facing up to the moral, social and economic consequences of the world conditions of his time.

Truth Is More Sacred. By Edward Dahlberg and Herbert Read. Horizon Press. $4.95. This is a highly unusual exchange about some key figures in modern literature. As literary critics both Dahlberg and Read are *sui generis.* With their pronounced capacity for phrase making and apt allusions, they make what they have to say about such authors as Joyce, Lawrence, Henry James, and T. S. Eliot into quite a departure from the usual academic pieties.

The Ground I Walked On. By George N. Shuster. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $4.50. Dr. Shuster was president of Hunter College in New York City from 1939 to 1959. What he has to say here consists chiefly of recollections about and reflections upon that turbulent period. The recollections of persons and events are warm and vivid; the reflections upon war, communism, education, women, and the college presidency are wise and eminently thought-provoking.

SAMUEL DRAPER

The Breaking of the Circle. By Marjorie Hope Nicolson. Columbia University Press. $3.75. A distinguished work of literary criticism is rare. An intellectual treatise written in a beautiful style is rarer. But rarest of all is a book which contributes to the history of ideas, adds to a more thorough understanding of 17th-century English literature, and provides a richer appreciation of the great poets of that era.

Scarred. By Bruce Lowery. Vanguard. $3.75. This is a story about a boy with a scar, the relic of a harelip. Enjoying his parents' affection and the friendship of his younger brother, he experiences his first blow in the stupid and cruel world of school children. Compelled by some deep impulse, by an extremely complex urge, he hurts the one boy whom he truly loves, his only friend. The remorse that follows is conveyed by Mr. Lowery in the most penetrating fashion. When he discovers the meaning of love because of a strange and beautiful gift from beyond the grave, his story is complete. Originally written in French, this first novel is classical in its cohesion and clarity and forcefully alive with universal meaning.

Paul Claudel: The Man and the Mystic. By Louis Chaigne. Translated by Pierre de Fontnouvelle. Appleton-Century-Crofts. $4.95. Paul Claudel led three lives simultaneously—diplomat, writer, and Christian. In this first full-length biography, Louis Chaigne examines these three facets of Claudel's existence. Have any of Claudel's fellow citizens served their God, their art, and their country so well? Chaigne tells us concerning Claudel's funeral, "There was only one oration, that of Jean-Louis Barrault: 'In Claudel there was never a break between earthly reality and the mystery of God. . . . You enlisted in the army of your church without losing any of your lucidity, of your innovating and indeed revolutionary nature. . . . Like a very unhappy little child, I thank you for the real life which you gave me. . . .'"

Lord of the Flies. By William Golding. Capricorn. $1.25. Any author who can write an adventure story about boys on a desert island which goes far beyond the degeneration of a few children to encompass one of the central issues of modern thought deserves the highest praise. That issue deals with the human personality itself—in all its horrifying aspects of evil—and with the reflection of that personality on society.

JAMES FINN

Resistance, Rebellion and Death. By Albert Camus. Trans. by Justin O'Brien. Knopf. $4. The limitations and weaknesses of Camus become increasingly clearer even in the short perspective we have been given since his death. He has been criticized, with some justice I think, as a nineteenth- rather than a twentieth-century figure. But none of this criticism outweighs his value as a lucid intelligence and troubled conscience. His virtues were human and life-size.

Nobody Knows My Name. By James Baldwin. Dial. $4.50. This volume of collected essays is confirmation that James Baldwin is one of America's finest writers. The essays are uneven; some are slight and

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dated already because of their subject, some simply deserve more thought than Baldwin has devoted to them. But in this book and in his earlier *Notes of a Native Son* he has frequently written with a combination of passion, insight and intelligence to which his prose is equal. What sets Baldwin apart from even the best of his contemporaries is that he is an unproclaimed moralist whose arguments and insights rest on traditional and, in the best sense, even conventional values.

On the Contrary. By Mary McCarthy. Farrar. $4.50. Miss McCarthy is sometimes too contrary by half. But of course the irritation she provokes is part of the effect she strives for. Here she is at her acerbic best on Mlle. de Beauvoir, writing courses and fashion, and at less than her best on Arthur Miller, Gandhi and Hannah Arendt. What I found of most interest, however, were her comments on contemporary fiction. Her theorizing—about her own creative processes as well as that of others—is not impressive, but all the facts seem to be on her side.

Between Past and Future. By Hannah Arendt. Viking. $5. To most people concerned with modern political thought Miss Arendt needs no introduction. For those who need an introduction this is probably not it. Some of her earlier, briefer essays or even her longer work on totalitarianism might be better. But it is the same forceful, original mind at work here, a mind as at home with classic philosophic thought as with the contemporary problems on which it is brought to bear.

The Jews and the Gospel. By Gregory Baum, O.S.A. Newman, $4.50. This is, as the title indicates, a specialized study. But it has not only theological but immediately cultural relevance. I would venture that many American Catholics share the confusion that was Father Baum's when he was first asked to speak on the relation of Jews to the Church of Christ. And I would further hazard that they could find no better guide than Father Baum to lead them out of that confusion to a clear understanding of the true relation, with all its implications for the Christian of thought, action and prayer.

ANNE FREMANTLE

In the Spirit of Wonder. By Maria L. Shrady. Pantheon. $4.50. A book for Christmas itself, a birthday present for the Birthday, beautifully produced and illustrated (by Johannes Troyer, who also did the book jacket) this is a Christmas anthology for our age. Maria Shrady, whose previous anthology of mystical writings, *Come, South Wind,* admirably illustrated the quality of her taste and of her own "interior caste," divides her Christmas offerings into Incarnation (ranging from 14th century to W. H. Auden); Celebration; Reflection (including a magnificent Ronald Knox story, "The Reprieve," which couldn't be more timely, to be read while waiting for the end of the world to begin); Meditation; and Epilogue.

The Queen's Portrait: the story of Guadalupe. By Sister Mary Amatora. Academy Library Guild, Fresno. $3.95. How many American Catholics realize that Our Lady appeared here, four hours flying time from New York? And that she appeared to an American? To visit her shrine is under three days' drive by car, and it is to be hoped that Sister Amatora's beautifully illustrated and admirably documented book will make all her readers "long to go on pilgrimage" and then really go.

Stranger in the House: A study of Catholic Youth in America. By Andrew Greeley. Sheed and Ward. $3.50. Father Greeley looks at the juvenile delinquency statistics—one million in 1956, two million this year—and reflects on some of the reasons why children get that way. And suggests some remedies: strong ones, holy ones, practical ones. A book for all parents.

Orestes or the Art of Smiling. By Domenico Gnoli. Simon and Schuster. $6.95. For sheer delight, whether you are child or parent, black or white, male or female, read *Orestes.* The only problem is whether the story is illustrated by the drawings, or whether the drawings are the inspiration for the enchanting story of the twenty-year old Prince of Terramafiusa and the splendid parrot, Lucien. My advice is that you buy or beg this beautiful book.

Black Like Me. By John Howard Griffin. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50. It was to an Indian boy Our Lady appeared at Guadalupe and her face, miraculously imprinted on his *tilma,* is dark. Many white people, struggling to understand the race problem, wish it weren't true, at the end of every effort, every discussion, that "you're still white." John Howard Griffin, a native Texan, living where his parents before him lived at Mansfield, Texas, decided to "do something about it." He persuaded a doctor to give him pills that turned him black, and for six weeks he hitchhiked, walked and rode the buses through Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, finally returning to New Orleans. This is the pilgrimage *par excellence* of our time: the story of an incarnation made by one man, in deep reverence for the Divine Humanity that is daily insulted, buffeted, scourged, beaten, and bled in every black man whites insult. Mr. Griffin's heroic charity and courage are a glory for the Church.

SAMUEL HAZO

Power and Responsibility. By Romano Guardini. Henry Regnery Company. $3. In these years of titanic power struggles, it is growing gradually more unavoidable that modern man must choose one of two alternatives. According to Guardini, man must either "match the greatness of his power with the strength of his humanity, or surrender his humanity to power and perish." Guardini's prophetic book is a study of the requirements needed to make the correct choice, and he underlines the urgency with a warning no one can forget: "Since Hiroshima we know that we live on the rim of disaster and that we shall stay there till the end of history."

Children and Older Strangers. By Ernest Sandeen. University of Notre Dame Press. $3. There are two things to recommend this book. The first is that it contains good poems, and the second is that it is Notre Dame's first venture in publishing modern poetry. Notre Dame made no mistake in choosing Sandeen to launch what I hope will be a continuing series. A

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thumbnail sketch of the many admirable qualities of these poems would be impossible here. The two-part poem called "Last Things" is one of the most moving poems I have ever read, and it is typical of Sandeen's deft and beautiful art.

Movies, Morals and Art. By Frank Getlein and Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. Sheed and Ward. $3.95. Mr. Getlein adroitly discusses the effect of the profit motive on cinematography and writes good critiques of the work of D. W. Griffith and Mack Sennett, before tackling the "cult-of-personality" morass and the "jolly priest movies" manufactured for Catholic suckers. Father Gardiner's subsequent treatment of specific moral problems raised by specific films and the effect of films on social behavior is fair, incisive and as thorough as it has to be.

The Happy Critic. By Mark Van Doren. Hill and Wang. $3.50. High above the mishmash of literary detection, critical scientism, critical incest and the ponderous explications found in the "trade" journals stands the calm wisdom of Mark Van Doren. Of all the excellent essays contained in this book I found the study of Whitman one of the best (if not *the* best) I have read on the subject. This book has another asset frequently absent from many current books of criticism. It is well written.

The Soul Afire. Edited by H. A. Reinhold. Meridian. $1.95. The paperback re-issue of this anthology should not go unheralded. Father Reinhold is careful to note that his book is not a treatise on the "ways and methods of mysticism." Nor does it contain mystical writings exclusively. Also included are those writings that "help prepare the mind for truly mystical writings." This was the best anthology of its kind when it first appeared in 1944. It still is. Now that it is in paperback, more people can own it.

BETTY KAUFMAN

Pablo Picasso: Toros y Toreros. Text by Luis Miguel Dominguin and George Boudaille. Harry N. Abrams. $25. A luxurious, stylish edition, full of the "spontaneous" look of Picasso's sketchbooks on the subject of bullfighters, picadors, ladies on horseback, bullrings and all that goes on in them. The immediacy of the effect —particularly in the line drawings and ink washes—is a delight. In these sketches Picasso seems part bull and part bullfighter himself: the vitality and control change places and sometimes clash or balance superbly. The page on which the wash-figures of the "performers" in the bullfight are silhouetted against the white glare of the paper-arena facing them is one of the high points of this fine and spirited art book. The text by Dominguin is intriguing if somewhat feverish.

Picasso's Picassos. By David Douglas Duncan. Harper. $30. Splendid color photographs of 102 choice paintings by Picasso, hitherto secluded in his private collection. The period from 1895 to 1960 is covered, the late '30's most densely represented. This book has the intimacy of a family album—a family of paintings —and it presents the aura of Picasso's temperament. Intense expression

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metamorphosed into diagrams of form: this seems to be the essence of Picasso's style. Author-photographer Duncan has contributed the amiable text and also a comprehensive catalogue with small black-and-white photographs of Picasso's entire collection.

The Spanish Arts of Latin America. By François Cali. Photographs by C. Arthaud and F. Hébert-Stevens. Viking. $12.50. The "secrets of the arts of the Conquistadors" and their heirs or victims—those gifted children of the Inca, Aztec and Mayan cultures —are based here on a fascinating account of valor and greed, suffering and luxury, asceticism and indolence. The conquistadors of gold and "*a lo divino*" left behind them monuments and works of art of baroque fantasy and fervent piety that later flowered in an amalgam with their conquered succession; this art is photographed and analyzed with lively erudition in this excellent study by three Frenchmen. In a most particular way the art of Latin America is the art "of the Catholic faith, both in its magnificent and in its humble, everyday forms," and this is found to be the common denominator in the art that proliferated all over the southern continent.

The Horizon Book of The Renaissance. By the Editors of Horizon Magazine with biographical essays by Morris Bishop, Garrett Mattingly, Kenneth Clark, Ralph Roeder, J. Bronowsky, Iris Origo, H. R. Trevor-Roper, Denis Mack Smith, Maria Bellonci. American Heritage. $17.50. A handsome compendium of a tremendous "era," the biographical essays stand out like excellent raisins in a tolerable cake. A Christmas-gift art book for the general public par excellence, a great many unusual illustrations decorate and animate the whole volume.

Van Gogh: A Self-Portrait. Letters Revealing His Life As A Painter. Selected by W. H. Auden. New York Graphic Society. $10. "One does not paint in order to have an easy time of it." This quotation from a letter of Van Gogh to his brother Theo in 1885 assumes a terrible poignancy in the light of his struggles and suffering; it is also typical of the modest, almost humble dedication to his work that suffuses these eager letters with an illuminating glow. The letters reveal the man as well as the artist, but their great value lies in what they record of Van Gogh's ideas about painting, which range from the most lucid philosophic awareness of general aims and expression to the most specific details of means.

ALICE ELLEN MAYHEW

The Children of Sanchez. By Oscar Lewis. Random House. $7.50. Oscar Lewis has recorded the autobiographies of five members of an impoverished, urban Mexican family in a devastating account of the violent struggles and misapprehensions of a remarkable man and his four children by his first marriage. The picture is unpretty but the voices are the immediate and authentic expressions of five very different people, passionate and sometimes eloquent.

An End To Glory. By Pierre-Henri Simon. Harper. $3.00. One of the finest novels to come out of France since the war. A professional Army officer, for whom soldiering is a vocation and fighting injustice an act of chivalry and self-abnegation, serves his country brilliantly in World War II. He is less convinced about the morality of Christian warriors in Indo-China. When it comes to Algeria, he is forced to extricate himself with great pain. The morality of war, of colonialism, of terror, the spiritual solitude of the intelligent and sensitive soldier, are compassionately dramatized through the conscience of one man who is committed to his country and its true source of glory —honor.

Shadows on The Grass. By Isak Dinesen. Random House. $3.75. Isak Dinesen's literary reputation will rest on her extraordinary gothic tales but she is probably most famous for *Out of Africa,* her stories of her life in East Africa between 1914 and 1931 which are written with the same beautiful simplicity as her fiction but with a great deal more sentimentality. This collection of four stories was written twenty-five years after the fact, and if they err a little bit on the side of romanticism they are humorous and touching.

A Burnt-out Case. By Graham Greene. Viking. $3.95. From a purely technical view Graham Greene's language is at its apex here. The character of the famous architect who is severed from life, spiritually burnt-out, is more of a symbol than a pure literary creation (as Scobie was not) but his explanation and absolution touches down from time to time on the source: lack of faith, spiritual death, ultimate disillusion. I believe this book in many ways marks a progression in Greene's perennial argument between the rules of faith and religion and the incomprehensible but infinite Divine Love.

Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place. By Malcolm Lowry. Lippincott. $4.95. A posthumous collection by an author whose considerable reputation had rested on one book, *Under the Volcano.* Lowry is essentially a poet. His language is effusive, impressionistic and sometimes sheerly beautiful. Sickened by and sick of modern civilization, Lowry presents a surrealist pastorale as though Picasso were to give his vision of Walden.

BETTE RICHART

Resistance, Rebellion and Death. By Albert Camus. Trans. by Justin O'Brien. Knopf. $4.00. Camus' sobriety and elegance, his counsel to "create dangerously," his moving faith that "each and every man builds for all," are a permanent requiem.

Collected Poems. By Robert Graves. Doubleday. $6.00. These poems rather amusingly resemble the classically heroic visage of the author. They are pure and strong, stunning and fearless. Yeats and Graves may wind up presiding jointly over the world of modern English poetry, when Eliot and his followers have faded like daguerreotypes.

Diff'rent. By Eugene O'Neill. Boni & Liveright (1925 Edition). As St. Paul noticed long ago, one of the greatest human frailties is to emphasize differences (imaginary superiorities, that is) rather than similarities. This insight into a woman's heart is intimately shattering; you won't quickly forget that love must be likeness if it is to survive.

The Making of the President 1960.

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By Theodore H. White. Atheneum. $6.95. That such a mass of detail can remain so lively amounts to a tour de force. Mr. White is the Breughel of the contemporary political scene.

The Buried Day. By C. Day Lewis. Doubleday. $4.00. Dorothy Parker says poets alone should kiss and tell. Be that as it may, they do write superb autobiographies; I can't think of a single exception. After all, self-awareness is their business.

JOHN P. SISK

The Quest For Paradise. By Charles L. Sanford. University of Illinois Press. $5.00. This splendid essay on the significance of the Edenic myth in American culture is not likely to be read by those who need it most: the passionate fundamentalists for whom the American story is a soap opera without time relations. Mr. Sanford's book gives powerful support to his conviction that "We need a tragic view of life to confront our problems more realistically." He writes in the best conservative tradition, which means that his reading of America will be unacceptable to many of those currently passing themselves off as conservatives.

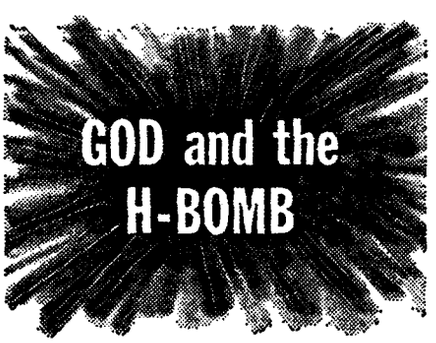
The Wordly Philosophers. By Robert L. Heilbroner. Simon and Schuster. $1.50. The publishers are to be commended for reissuing as a paperback this fascinating presentation of the great economists. The author has extensively revised this eight-year-old book to bring it up to date and has added a chapter on the Victorian economist, Alfred Marshall. Mr. Heilbroner makes us see how right Keynes was when he said: "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood." I should add that Lord Keynes as presented by Mr. Heilbroner, has neither horns nor tail.

Movies, Morals, and Art. By Frank Getlein and Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. Sheed and Ward. $3.50. The authors make a perfect team in this esthetico-moral approach to the motion picture, especially since they agree that an exclusively esthetic or moral evaluation is useless. Among other things, Father Gardiner clears up some widespread misconceptions about the Legion of Decency. Mr. Getlein's hundred pages on the art of the movie are as perceptive as anything I have seen on this subject. He is particularly good on the effects of the star system and on the movie as a time machine.

The White Nile. By Alan Moorehead. Harpers. $5.95. Nothing in Purchas or Hakluyt ever gripped my imagination as did this account of the search for the sources of the White Nile. Mr. Moorehead never gives the reader reason to believe that he is doing any violence to historical fact, yet his presentation puts the exploits of Speke, Burton, Stanley, Livingston, Gordon and Kitchener on the level of heroic legend. This book would have been the perfect Christmas present for Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Machines And The Man: A Sourcebook on Automation. Edited by Robert P. Weeks. Appleton-Cen-

Leaders of three major religions discuss the choice mankind must make now between



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tury-Crofts. $2.45. This anthology is one of the many fine "sourcebooks" that have brightened the academic scene in recent years. A book for the layman who wants to know what automation means in its scientific, psychologic, sociologic, economic, political and moral contexts, its contributors include Peter Drucker, Norbert Wiener, Geoffrey Ashe, Walter Reuther, James R. Bright, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence and E. E. Cummings. The latter urges us to "pity this busy monster, manunkind," but pity, the intelligent reader of this book may conclude, is not enough.

WILLIAM JAMES SMITH

Franny and Zooey. By J. D. Salinger. Little, Brown. $4.00. They're beginning to gang up on the Old Master. A number of things brought it on. His mysticism is getting to look a little too chic, he is Number One on the best seller lists, and he has been recognized by *Time* and *Life;* but though we hate the Zen we must love the Zenner.

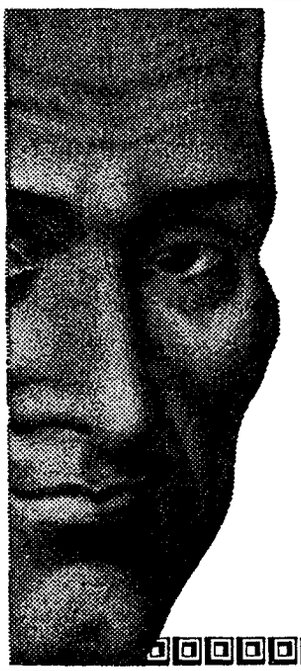
The Bachelors. By Muriel Spark. Lippincott. $3.95. The murky world of Mrs. Spark's strange, possessed people is not this world but it is a fascinating one. Her mystical vision, in any event, has nothing in common with Mr. Salinger's.

Through the Fields of Clover. By Peter de Vries. Little, Brown. $3.95. America's leading comic novelist with more of his beleaguered but dauntless creations. Pretty much par for de Vries, which is a great deal.

The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu. By Sax Rohmer. Pyramid. 35¢. "Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan. . . ." A great children's classic reissued.

Writers on the Left. By Daniel Aaron. Harcourt Brace. $7.50. You may regard Mr. Aaron's view of the flirtation of literary America in the Thirties with Communism as rather more nostalgic and admiring than the facts—or the literary output—warrant, but it is a conscientious and scholarly reconstruction of that sad period.

Rabbit, Run. By John Updike. Knopf. $4.00. Came out late in 1960 actually but it's worth carrying over. The most derivative of novels but a disturbingly original one at that. Bits and pieces of Nabokov, Salinger, Kerouac, Joyce, the Angry Young Men, and who not all, but a lot of Updike too.



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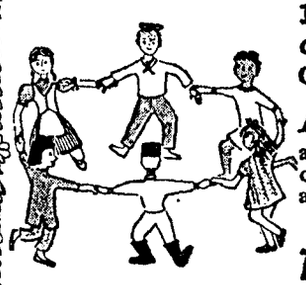

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CRITICS

Philip Deasy is a member of the English faculty at St. Peter's College, New Jersey.

Samuel Draper teaches English at Barnard College in Columbia University.

James Finn is the education director of the Council on Religion and International Affairs and editor of "Worldview."

Anne Fremantle is the well-known writer, lecturer and critic.

Samuel Hazo, a poet and critic, is a member of the faculty at Duquesne University.

Betty Kaufman is the regular art critic for The Commonweal.

Alice Ellen Mayhew works for a well-known New York publishing house.

Bette Richart is a poet and critic.

John P. Sisk is on the faculty of Gonzaga University, Spokane.

William James Smith is one of the editors of Atomic Industrial Forum, a magazine devoted to the industrial uses of atomic energy.

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The Many Forms Which Loss Can Take

Tell Me a Riddle. By Tilly Olson. Lippincott. $3.50.

by Richard M. Elman

FOUR STORIES make up this first book by a gifted, mature artist with an uncanny sense of compassion. Rarely, at least in recent years, has the literature of alienation been engaged in such devout service of the imagination. In writing which is individualized but not eccentric, experimental but not obscure, Mrs. Olson has created imagined expirience which has the authenticity of autobiography or memoir. With a faultless accuracy, her stories treat the very young, the mature, the dying—poor people without the means to buy or invent lies about their situations—and yet her writing never succumbs to mere naturalism.

Some critics will persist in finding analogies to Mrs. Olson's work in the socially conscious literature of the thirties. They are there, if one wishes to be blind to everything else, but the truth is that Mrs. Olson has been more daring. Sometimes she is able to compress within the space of a single sentence or a brief paragraph the peculiar density of a career, a lifetime, in the manner of lyric poetry. It follows that the poverty which she describes never strikes one as formulary or anachronistic, but as an image for contemporary experience. Although addicted to metaphorical language, she uses it flexibly and unself-consciously to record, to analyze, and then to judge, fusing it with thought and feeling in such a way that the prose becomes the central intelligence of these dramas. "For forty-seven years they had been married," she begins the title story of her collection. "How deep the quarrel reached, no one could say—but only now when tending to the needs of others no longer shackled them together, the roots swelled up visible, split the earth between them, and the tearing shook even to the children, long since grown."

Some of these stories have their faults, but they are faults of enthusiasm. Occasionally the prose will get out of hand, or, in choosing to be on such intimate terms with her characters, Mrs. Olson will descend to a literal-mindedness which is her humanity unrestrained. Even so, there are stories in this collection which are perfectly realized works of art.

The foremost of these is a dramatic monologue entitled "I Sit Here Ironing," in which an unnamed and physically nondescript woman (a voice really), after a lifetime of deprivation, explains as she does the day's ironing the growth of her estrangement from her homely, first-born daughter. As she describes the early slights and disasters which brought such a relationship about, one has revealed the many human forms which loss can take. Mrs. Olson's woman is burdened with exhaustion, a victim of a world in which all the panaceas have been discredited. To say that she seems ordinary or without stature indicates only the costume she may be wearing, for her suffering is made extraordinarily vivid and historic.

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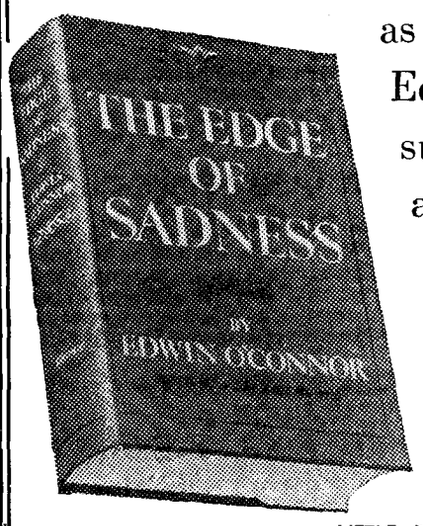
At one point she reflects: "In this and other ways she leaves her seal, I say aloud. And startle at my saying it. What do I mean? What did I start to gather together, to try and make coherent. I was at the terrible growing years. War years. I do not remember them well. I was working, there were four smaller ones now. She had to help to be a mother, and housekeeper, and shopper. She had to set her seal. Mornings of crisis and near hysteria trying to get lunches packed, haircomb, coats and shoes found; everyone to school or child care on time, the baby ready for transportation. And always the paper scribbled on by a smaller one, the book looked at by Susan and mislaid, the homework not done. Running out to that huge school where she was one, she was lost, she was a drop; suffering over the unpreparedness, stammering and unsure in her classes . . . ."

"I Sit Here Ironing" is a catalogue of the failure of intimacy; yet it forces us to understand precisely because it is so intimate.

The other stories in this remarkable collection have equally remarkable titles. One is called "Hey Sailor What Ship"; another, tersely, "O Yes." The title story is Mrs. Olson's longest and most ambitious work. Although she had explored the possibility of multiple consciousnesses functioning within the same dramatic situation in the earlier "Hey Sailor What Ship," one feels that in the final story she has actually fleshed two protagonists of equal vigor, enmeshing them in a marriage which seems as real and as permanent as any one will encounter in recent fiction. "Tell Me A Riddle" is a modern day "Ivan Illych." The death of Mrs. Olson's heroine is the death of social consciousness itself, gruesome, alienated, and without consolation. In the death-struggle of this old activist and her mate (with both continually pitting their dignities against the other), Mrs. Olson has envisaged a true tragedy of human mortality. In the last grim acts of a social protest which sprang from love, not cant, she puts it more eloquently than I can, in the words of the desolated old man who has been left behind, when he says: "Aaah, children . . . how we believed, how we belonged."

This Christmas the first choice as a gift is Edwin O'Connor's superb novel about a priest.



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Vitamins and Cake

Daughter of Silence. By Morris L. West. Morrow. $3.95.

by Oona Sullivan

PEOPLE WHO couldn't be bribed or beaten into reading books on theology, philosophy or psychology will swallow chunks of all three in Morris West's popular novels. West feeds his readers piecemeal reflections on God, man, the world, hidden like vitamin pills in large slices of literary cake—romance, intrigue, melodrama, spiced with sin, all kinds of sin. If the reader finds the pill not to his liking or too hard to chew he can spit it out and go on with the cake—skip the message and keep the story.

West's latest novel isn't quite as complicated in plot and sub-plot as *The Devil's Advocate,* nor are there as many sins. But there are enough to keep things going. He tells the story of a trial for a vendetta murder committed by a young woman in a small village in Tuscany. She is defended by a young Siena lawyer who is cuckolded by his wife and dominated by his father-in-law, a brilliant, aging advocate who gets vicarious pleasure from his daughter's adulterous affairs. As a sort of relief from the devious and complex personalities of the Italians, there's an Australian criminal psychiatrist and

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a French artist, who fall in love pretty much the way people fall in love in this kind of novel.

As West serves up his story he has a lot of things to say about the conflict between law and justice. He makes the point that the laws of men and our ideas of justice are affected by time—and not only by the present but also by what happened in the past and what may happen later. Thus a revenge murder that would have been justifiable sixteen years ago during the war is now a threat to political order and bodes ill for the future.

Some other Westian reflections: solving one series of problems usually only clears the way for others to take their place; it is better for men to be involved in the world even if that results in sin, pain and violence than to take no chances and remain aloof and pure; things are rarely what they seem—especially in Italy where people are famous for making an art of life but just as often, by their tortuous human relations and their penchant for personal intrigue, make it a tedious, nerve-wracking game.

West isn't much of a stylist. His plots frequently lurch into melodrama or romantic fluff and what he has to say in his serious moments is neither original nor profound. But the people who enjoy his books probably recognize in his homely intuitions much of what they already know to be true, organized philosophical systems notwithstanding. This somehow makes him better than most popular novelists but it will never make him anything more.

A Tired Avant Garde

New World Writing 19. J. B. Lippincott. $3.50.

by William James Smith

NEW WORLD WRITING has become a venerable institution in the ten years of its existence. It has aged rapidly. I can remember the beatnik equivalents of ten years ago reading the early issues with what amounted to enthusiasm, though of course never admitted as such. I can't imagine

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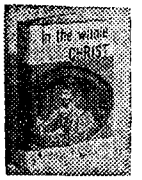

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a contemporary beatnik touching *New World Writing* with a ten foot pole. Though, to be fair, something has happened to the beatniks, too—the current crop doesn't even pretend to be interested in writing. On the other hand, I can't even imagine English teachers reading this issue of *New World Writing*. No, upon consideration, I can. I can imagine their glowing words for something that is a little *different* without being just plain filth, something that *broadens* their outlook and makes them feel they have been to Spain or India for a brief though memorable visit, something that jogs their minds a little and makes them *think*, something that reminds them that words can be used beautifully to *communicate*, not just to entertain.

Not just to entertain! Oh, if there were only one interesting story in the book! You could forgive the social moralizing and the verbal pretentiousness and the demented obscurities if only there were a story of any sort, any sort. The two best pieces in the book (and it is a skimpy one in terms of quantity as well as quality) are stories by Elizabeth Starr Hill ("The Old Dog") which dares at least to indulge in a little unalloyed emotion and Leland Webb ("Bricktop: He Rambled") which is wonderfully racy in vernacular. Both however, I suspect, shine brighter for their setting, which is pretty leaden otherwise.

The difficulty I feel is probably not an editorial one but auctorial. Why are they all so perishing dreary? I don't mean unhappy (though the avant garde seems to suffer from a real conformity cliché known as the Unhappy Ending). I think I could go along with the tragic view of life and with a penchant for horror (slit throats and mangled children) and social meliorism (suffering Spain, the suffering South)—if only there were a *little* vitality to any of it. But I get the distinct impression that most of *New World Writing's* contributors are too tired to dot their i's. They are really bored. They are bored not only with the world, they are bored with their own writing. They are too bored to smoke marijuana. They are too bored to be shocked or indignant or bright or funny or loving. They

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are all huddled in corners looking faintly bilious. They are very non-aggressive. They believe in understatement to the point where everything gets very very very hushed.

And symbols! Talk about your cultural lag! Why is it that the avant garde is always the last to catch up? These boys are still kicking symbols around as though they discovered them. Even the *Saturday Evening Post* has given up that jazz. You could forgive a French contributor to the book for not knowing this. But an American! If you really want to be bored you have to eschew symbols. They indicate a slight interest on the part of the author in his subject matter.

But enough of carping! The book has one thing to recommend it, a saving touch of good old-fashioned belly-laugh humor. A final section, entitled "The Poet and His Critics: A Symposium," more than makes up for all the languours of the rest of the book. Here three well known poets and critics make a mock-serious commentary on the work of a fourth. It is all done with a delightfully straight-faced pedantic drollery that should leave you in stitches. The poem on which they are commenting is an incomprehensible one in the first place and there is much good-natured by-play emanating from this ("It's a religious experience!" " It's a bout of insanity!" "It's an evocation of the fabulous!" "It's literal!" "It's figurative!" "It has a beginning, a middle and an end!" "It has a beginning and a middle but no end!"). The cream of the jest is a final commentary by the ostensible author of the poem in which, under the guise of "quibbling," he completely disagrees with all the interpretations except for a few random complimentary remarks.

This feature, I understand, is going to be a regular one, though for all I know, this may be a part of the joke, it's all done so solemnly! I can only say this alone will keep me reading *New World Writing*. I haven't had so much fun since those halcyon days in the Modern Language Reading Room at the University of Chicago, where, of course, it was all done very seriously and very often ended up in *PLMA*. The humor, to be sure, is a rather specialized one, but probably every intellectual discipline has its equivalent. Would that every discipline had the happy facility of laughing at itself as heartily as this! The tears are still streaming down my face.

New World Writing is a lovely, well-meaning book. I urge everyone who can truly afford it to buy a copy. And to read it.

Also I didn't mean those ugly things I said about English teachers. You are not fatuous. You are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. I love you.

REVIEWERS

Richard M. Elman, who has contributed to the *Saturday Review* and other magazines, is the author of the novel *A Coat for the Tsar.*

Oona Sullivan is an associate editor of *Jubilee.* This is her second appearance in The Commonweal.

William James Smith is one of the editors of *Atomic Industrial Forum* and a frequent contributor to The Commonweal.

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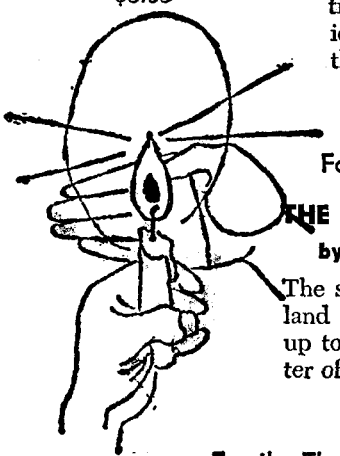

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